University of Alberta

Listening To Early Childhood Preservice Teachers

by

Frances R. Sherwood ©

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education

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Abstract

This study focuses on the perceptions, beliefs, and values which are important in the development, learning, and field-based activities of three early childhood preservice teachers. Constructivism is a guiding principle for the study and congruence is proposed between two learner-centered education perspectives. The first perspective outlines some principles of learner-centered early childhood education which preservice teachers can use to develop appropriate learning opportunities for young children. A second parallel perspective discusses the notion of listening to the voices of preservice teachers as primary influences in their learning. In addition, social and cultural landscapes are explored in relationship to learner-centered teacher education.

Biographical conversations, student-teacher reflection journals, and observation field-notes comprise the data for the study. The biographical conversations are rich in images, narratives, and perceptions which center around the preservice teachers' early childhood experiences, school experiences, interactions with young children, and current realities in teacher education. The voices of the preservice early childhood teachers are grounded in their experiences and reflections.

The structure and form of the hermeneutic circle and other interpretative inquiry aspects for informing the biographic method are the qualitative principles employed in the collection and analysis of the research information. The text is categorized and interpreted, and the participants' experiences are filtered to make connections to teacher education as discussed in the following five main areas. (1) learners can be at the center and have power over their own learning, (2) teaching climates and moral responsibility are integral aspects in the development and learning of young children and preservice teachers, (3) implicit perceptions and beliefs of preservice teachers can be made explicit by recognizing images and articulating

realities through biographical conversations, (4) the audiences and arenas for listening to preservice teachers, and (5) some educational myths in teacher education. Finally, the concluding statements of the study suggest implications and recommendations for the future education of preservice teachers when they are involved in a constructivist and learner-centered perspective.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> All groups have a right to speak for themselves, in their own voice, and have that voice accepted as authentic and legitimate
> (Harvey, 1989)

Purpose and Rationale of Study

The traditional method of teacher education reflects Friere's (1970) analogy of banking. This analogy, when applied to teacher education, suggests that theoretical knowledge about good teaching is given to preservice teachers, is deposited in their bank of knowledge, and when needed is withdrawn. In this simplistic view of teacher preparation, preservice teachers are instructed in theories of education and pedagogy to improve practice and ultimately increase students' achievements (Doyle, 1977, Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). The approach of putting in and taking out knowledge is being questioned by many inside and outside the educational establishment (Clark, 1988, Levin & Clowes, 1991; Eisner, 1993, Fosnot, 1989; Marshall, 1992; Swarts, 1991). However, the issue is not whether preservice teachers should possess theoretical knowledge, but how can preservice teachers be educated to guide the learning of children rather than to perpetuate traditional instructional methods.

While this concern about preservice teacher education has not been solved, it is being addressed in a number of ways. For example, Barr and Tagg (1995) discuss a learning paradigm in which the voices of preservice teachers are considered in the design of their own teacher preparation. Other teacher educators use reflective practices as a means of involving preservice teachers in the negotiation and construction of their knowledge about teaching. One area that is only beginning to be

recognized for the education of preservice teachers is the relationship of perceptions, beliefs, and values to practice. A belief is a genuine mental acceptance or judgment of the truth or lack of truth of a proposition, and beliefs are usually derived from personal characteristics and previous experiences. Pajaries (1992) explains that a belief can be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say and do. On the other hand, a perception is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (1995) as the interpretation of stimuli, sensations, or objects.

The identification and understanding of implicitly held perceptions, beliefs, and values of preservice teachers are vital in developing a learning approach for teacher education (Beattie, 1995; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Wubbles, 1992; van Manen, 1996). Articulated perceptions, beliefs, and values give preservice teachers a reality check on established practices (Harvey, 1989; Beattie, 1995), provide for expectations and reflections (Good, 1981; Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991), and influence their effectiveness in field-based experiences (Ashton, 1990; Brophy & Good, 1974; Hollingsworth, 1989; Schommer, 1994). These perceptions, beliefs, and values of preservice teachers are an integral part of constructing and reconstructing educational experiences for developing practical activities and often act as filters through which decisions are made regarding the design and implementation of teacher preparation programs (Brown, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1982). Also, social, political, and personal landscapes that encourage or hinder the articulation of perceptions, beliefs, and values of prospective teachers are important dimensions in the learning process (Britzman, 1986; Butt, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Kleinsasser, 1991; Marlow, 1987).

A constructivist perspective of learning is a guiding principle for the study, and biographical conversations which are grounded in the experiences of the preservice teachers allow the researcher to listen to the participants and to trust them to provide valuable insights into their teaching preparation programs. Each participant's

biography generates beliefs and perceptions which are interpreted to make sense of learning opportunities.

Teacher Education

The formal preparation of preservice teachers, for the most part, has been the prerogative of higher education institutions such as universities. Traditional teacher education programs usually focus on the theoretical knowledge and technical skills that teachers are thought to need in order to teach in schools. American studies, such as the Study of the Education of Educators (Sirotnik, 1990), document that teacher education in North America has three major components: (1) general academic requirements, (2) specialty studies, and (3) professional courses. The general academic component is often satisfied through a degree program in arts or sciences, or as liberal arts courses in the beginning years of an undergraduate education degree. The specialty courses consist, primarily, of courses in a chosen educational focus area such as special education, multicultural, or early childhood education. The professional studies include education methods, professional foundations, child development, and/or field-based courses or practicums. The requirements may vary somewhat from program to program, but students transferring from one program to another across North America adjust within the traditional instructional perspective with little difficulty.

Educational theorists such as Goodlad, Soder, and Sirotnik (1991), Grimmett and Erickson (1991), Schon (1987), and Zeichner (1990) have attempted to enhance the concept of teacher education through strategies which include moral responsibility, reflective practices, and practical inquiry. In some field-based experiences there is a growing recognition that preservice teachers may be encouraged to apply and reflect on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are developed and learned before and during their teacher preparation. However, even with the growing awareness of the

advantages of reflective practices which allow preservice teachers the opportunity to think critically about alternative programs, when they become part of practical field-based experiences, they are usually socialized into the school culture through an apprenticeship model. Clinical-supervision strategies that occur in a traditional and hierarchical order of authority often point out that student teachers can contribute little to a team concept in practical situations because of their lack of experience.

Professional development is life long, and beginning with preservice teachers an attitude of building on strengths is to be encouraged (Clark, 1991, Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). There are attempts to view optimal learning as occurring when preservice teachers are allowed to reconstruct lived experiences, negotiate meanings with others, and build new constructs with current realities. With positive images in mind, the teacher educator can support the development and learning of preservice teachers, and assist them to leave aside the cultural myths and misconceptions brought from historical traditions and a macroculture of vested interests. Wubbles (1992) and van Manen (1994) discuss a dimension of teacher education that is only beginning to be addressed by educational research and which focuses on the identification of personal qualities and their role in the growth and development of the preservice teacher.

Constructivism: A Guiding Perspective for the Study

In the education of preservice teachers, technical reality (Pinar, 1980) or procedural knowledge (Manus, 1995) may occur when didactic curriculum practices are the major guides for teacher effectiveness. Teacher education has traditionally been planned on the basis of knowledge that teachers are thought to require (Carter, 1993). Butt and Raymond (1987) argue that the growth of constructivist teacher development and thinking has two road blocks. The first block is the assumption that only a

scientific base of knowledge controls teacher preparation pedagogy, and the second is that those outside the classroom decide the roles and responsibilities of teachers

Constructivists assert that we can never know anything apart from ourselves and our experiences, and learning is said to be interactive, contextual, and projective (Fosnot, 1989). In teacher education, learning may occur in a constructivist paradigm when individuals actively construct and reconstruct knowledge in widening and intersecting networks of increasingly complex understandings (Marshall, 1992). Learning evolves from both social experiences and developmental processes as learners construct and build on what they bring to a situation. Higher level thought processes are generated, learning is scaffolded, understanding internalized, and a teacher educator may serve as a creative mediator in the process of assisting the education student, as well as self, in constructing knowledge (Piaget, 1962, Vygotsky, 1986).

In a constructivist approach, communication is used to help create meaning as learners and teachers collaboratively determine learning experiences. Within this process, all aspects of the learner's development (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive) are embraced and learners are encouraged to reflect and to create personal and meaningful understandings (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, Fosnot, 1988, Swarts, 1991). Each teacher candidate is unique due to past and current experiences with children, teachers, family, curricula, and other educational environments. The competing influences, dilemmas, paradoxes, and contradictions that are brought to the learning environments of preservice teachers make it next to impossible for researchers to predict the specific thoughts and actions that students will transfer to their professional practice. Actions that are constructed and intellectualized for subsequent use by preservice teachers are nested within uniquely personal and contextual influences (Butt & Raymond, 1987). Thus a constructivist perspective, in contrast to a traditional instructional viewpoint, emphasizes interrelated

and dynamic interactions and processes of learning (Bullough, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1994; Eisner, 1993).

As with many educational issues over the preceding decades, there are incongruencies in expectations among teacher educators about the outcomes and processes required for educational success, and there is very little evidence that preservice teachers are central in discussions advocating alternative approaches. However, if we maintain that preservice teachers construct and reconstruct experiences as an integral part of becoming a teacher, then teacher educators may need to practice learner-centered and active teacher education (Jones, 1986) where they listen more to students and encourage a range of solutions to questions or issues. For example, appropriate learning opportunities and practical experiences can facilitate the learning of preservice teachers in a constructivist approach such as developing teaching and learning through conversation (Bullough, 1994; Carson, 1989). These researchers discuss the need for a shared language for discussing topics of similar interest or concern and encouraging participants to speak honestly and openly. Education students can be assured a central place in designing an agenda and in deciding how the conversation will proceed. Bruner (1988) proposes that language is used in conversations as a way of programming and reflecting on experience. Experiences become more meaningful as they are discussed, and expressive language grows and develops as it is needed to relate the experience (Britton, 1979). Conversation in teacher preparation is a way for participants and/or researchers to construct and reconstruct experiences, to view individual realities, and to see possibilities for how things might develop.

Listening to Susan

One of the main tenets of participating in a conversation is to listen to the voice of the other and to attempt to understand his or her perspectives. The following is an

account of conversations with an early childhood preservice teacher and how listening to her concerns started raising issues and questions for me as a researcher

"Nobody is listening to me!" While working as a practicum supervisor for early childhood preservice students in a two year associate degree program, I sat in a coffee shop off campus and listened to the lived experiences of an early childhood practicum student. Susan was a soft spoken student who eagerly anticipated working with young children. In high school she had extensive experiences as a baby-sitter, had been employed as a camp counselor for several summers, and spoke of how her father had encouraged her to work with young children. Over the years she observed him teaching children in his elementary school classroom and admired his popularity with everyone in the school. As she was the youngest of several siblings who had children of their own, small children were a continuing extension of her family. Also, she recalled high school as being a time of fun, friends, and satisfactory experiences with course work, and she had expected the same success in college.

Our conversations occurred just as Susan was beginning a second round of practicum in an early childhood program. During observations of her work with children in the classroom, she demonstrated some very positive teacher-child interactions. She physically got down to their level, waited until she was invited before becoming involved in their play, and used a very appropriate voice level when communicating with the children. However, at times, she appeared to lack confidence in her role and would glance around the room as if seeking support. As our conversation continued, she expressed frustration at her inability to get up in the morning, complained about the difficulty of class assignments, and explained how little support was available for her efforts. She truly wanted to work with young children, but the message from her cooperating teacher and class instructors was that she must interact more capably with the children and adjust her attitude to be more cooperative with all concerned. Her most serious discomfort was that she felt she had not gained

enough knowledge in course work to successfully write the compulsory exams or competently interact with young children in early childhood programs. She pleaded, "Please tell me how to be successful in this early childhood teacher education program."

Perhaps this student could have been labeled a malcontent or a slacker, but the voices of other students in the practicum echoed her concerns, and a repeated message from the students requested that someone listen to their ideas and concerns. To me, these students reflected an image of young children whose behavior tells a story which they are unable to verbalize. They perceived their beliefs as being discounted, but they seemed unable to convince their class instructors or cooperating teachers to listen which, in turn, resulted in berating their instructors, programs, and/or themselves.

Potential early childhood teachers may need to be heard, not so they will dominate or avoid critical thinking, but so they may be an integral part of the conversations in making all learners, adults and children alike, a priority. Various issues, myths, and misconceptions may, in part, be responsible for the oscillation in the thinking of prospective teachers; as there is certainly a lack of consensus of what constitutes the best teacher education process. The conversations with Susan and some of her classmates signaled not only a plea for understanding and support, but also marked an epiphany in my career. I was so intrigued by the conversations with this group of students that I began a search to understand the perceptions of preservice teachers which influence their learning and development, the conditions which are necessary for teaching to take a conversational form, and the contextual connections that impede or accommodate realization of this active teaching ideal. Although there is considerable research in the area of teacher effectiveness which investigates how certain teacher behavioral variables relate to student achievement (Brophy & Good, 1986), researchers have only recently begun to focus on the personalized and social reconstructivist areas of preservice teacher education. Perhaps, due to the difficulties

of measuring the effectiveness of the concepts of personalized learning, the interpretations of experiences in teacher education have been viewed as expensive enhancements to basic teacher preparation (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1992). To this point, the learner rarely has an integral, collaborative voice in the design and implementation of teacher preparation programs.

Biography Opens the Door

Butt (1991) and Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1994) define education as those accounts of personal experience which are inextricably linked with the past as well as the present and the future. Perceptions and beliefs which evolve from these biographical experiences and conversations and which are made explicit in teacher education help shape preservice teachers' thinking and ultimate practice. Preservice teachers come to their teacher education with unique perspectives and personal autobiographies, and the environments of school and family leave prospective teachers with memories and schemata about the nature of teaching and the role of teachers in their previous experiences (Book & Freeman, 1986, Britzman, 1991, Knowles, 1993). Memories about schooling are often enshrouded in circumstances associated with critical incidents, are selective in nature, and are distorted because of time. Such memories represent views of teaching which, usually, are not based on reflection and only partial evidence is used from observations or significant others. However, it is not the memory as such, but the reconstructed experience over time that makes the difference in how an individual reacts and brings meaning to current practical situations. According to Adams (1994), biographic accounts can be used to enlighten the decisions that preservice teachers make about the value and usefulness of instructional principles encountered during university course work. There are implications for teacher educators to deliver more than monologues, as biographical conversations with preservice teachers have the potential for influencing their

arguments, shaping their reflections, and enhancing their effectiveness of practical activity.

Design of the Study

This study is designed to listen to the voices of individual preservice teachers and to interpret their past and current lived experiences in an attempt to understand how perceptions, beliefs, and values of preservice teachers are at the center of their development and learning. A review of theoretical literature and research studies provided a foundational understanding of teacher education issues, but I had no preconceived notions of how the participants perceived their involvement in their teacher education program. Preservice teachers, who are primarily prepared to recall and reproduce knowledge and information in a technical manner may be missing valuable educational opportunities. For example, Bullough (1994) discovered that many teacher education students responded to his teaching based upon their inarticulated assumptions about teaching. These students embraced activities and content that were congruent with their own beliefs, but ignored or discounted alternative education ideas which were contrary to their perceptions. Documentation of the learning of preservice teachers as they construct and reconstruct their experiences can encourage other teacher educators to provide an audience and arena for the voices of their students.

Primary Concern of the Study

What are the perceptions, beliefs, and values that three early childhood preservice teachers identify as integral and influential to their learning and development?

Additional Research Questions

1. What early childhood principles do these participants select as important for designing programs for young children?
2. In what ways do these three preservice teachers want to be involved in determining their teacher education experiences?
3. What landscapes are identified by preservice teachers as being important in their development as teachers?
4. What influences the perceptions, beliefs, and values of preservice teachers in their teacher education program?

Definition of Terms

Student University student enrolled in a teacher education program

Preservice teacher Student in a teacher education program who is not enrolled at this time in a practicum situation

Student Teacher Student in a teacher education program who is a participant in a practicum situation in a school based setting

Pupil Child in a school setting

Teacher Educator Professor, instructor, or graduate student who teaches in a teacher education program

Biographical Conversation Participant and researcher discussing lived experiences Used to provide an arena for the other's voice

Voice The discourse of preservice teachers which makes known and allows the expression of their perspectives, understandings, and claims

Landscapes Impressions and perceptions of personal and social interactions and climate which influence the education of preservice teachers

Co-operating teacher or school based facilitator. The classroom teacher who works with and encourages a student teacher to design, implement, and assess practical experiences with children.

University Facilitator. One who designs the environment, and invites, trusts, and empowers learners to construct their own learning opportunities through active involvement.

Boundaries of the Study

As a qualitative study, this investigation has the potential for revealing many facets of the lives and learnings of preservice teachers. Due to constraints of time and opportunity, some possible dynamic dimensions of the study will not be addressed. Implications for some of the following concepts are found at the conclusion of the study.

1. This study is only concerned with the early childhood preservice teacher, but some of the participants' experiences may reflect the learning and development of other preservice teachers.
2. While the education students who participated in this study were involved in some aspects of teacher education reform, such as alternative field-based courses, these aspects of change are not a major concern of this study.
3. In the participants' grounded experiences there are glimpses of their reasons for entering the education profession, but these are not a major concern of this study.
4. This study uncovers some interesting questions about the self-directed role of preservice teachers, but as the information is very personal and individual the findings can not be generalized.

Organization Of The Study

The introductory chapter of this study provides a discussion of the purpose of the study, an overview of traditional teacher education practices, and describes some alternatives approaches to teacher education. There is a discussion of constructivism as a guiding principle for this investigation and an introduction of biography as a means of understanding the relationship of perceptions, beliefs, and values of preservice teachers to practical activity. This section also includes an articulation of the concerns of the study, research questions, and a definition of terms.

Supporting text and references are selected and organized into two major components and are discussed in the second and third chapters. Two perspectives of teaching are discussed in Chapter 2. First the framework of psychometric learning for young children which is used predominately across North America is contrasted with a learner-centered perspective in which principles of early childhood development and learning are used in the design and implementation of programs for young children. The second perspective of teacher education contrasts the traditional aspects of teacher education with an alternative learner-centered method for preservice teachers which advocates the use of reflective practices, constructivist viewpoints, and personal perspectives. In Chapter 3, the contextual landscapes which may influence personalized and social reconstructivist approaches to teacher preparation are discussed. Chapter 4 contains a rationale for, and description of, the methodologies used in the study. The collection and conceptualization of information is primarily through shared biographical conversations which are grounded in the experiences and voices of the preservice teachers, and interpretations of these biographical conversations are discussed using interpretive inquiry principles. Aspects of the biographical conversations which reflect the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and values are presented and interpreted in Chapter 5. In the final chapter, Chapter 6, connections among biographical conversations, preservice teachers' reflections, and

my observation field notes are outlined. A discussion of future implications and recommendations for teacher education concludes the study.

Chapter 2

Perspectives of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation

Introduction

Two perspectives of early childhood teacher education are discussed in this chapter. The first perspective advocates learning principles which are used in designing and implementing learner-centered programs for young children. A second perspective involves the interpretation and construction of experiences by preservice teachers based on reflective practices and personal perceptions, beliefs, and values which influence their development and learning. Learner-centered teacher education in which preservice teachers can experience open, active, and self directed learning opportunities is integral to this perspective. These two perspectives are contrasted to the traditional instructional method which imparts information to learners.

The first perspective of teacher preparation in this document discusses principles which may be used as a foundation for building learner-centered, early childhood programs. Learner-centered education is defined as the learner having opportunities to construct and reconstruct experiences, to have a voice in learning priorities, and to be empowered in self-directed learning. Learners are seen as individuals with inherent rights who are worthy of respect and trust. A program that is learner-centered will strive to put the needs, interests, and experiences of the learner before the convenience, preconceptions, and instructional paradigms of the instructor or the institution. Programs that are learner-centered focus on stages of development, experiences, and problem solving situations. In addition, there will be mediating and scaffolding opportunities for individual learners (Hendricks, 1996).

Expectations and content for learner-centered, early childhood education as outlined in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation Criteria and Procedures (1991) are also described by Hendricks (1996) and Reynolds (1996). To assist in understanding what knowledge and skills may be useful in operating early childhood programs from a developmental approach, the initial part of this discussion will explore some principles on which learner-centered programs for young children are designed and implemented. In many early childhood teacher education programs, preservice teachers are expected to learn these principles

A second selected perspective in teacher education proposes that preservice teachers learn through a learner-centered approach where they construct and reflect on experiences so as to understand how their perceptions, beliefs, and values influence their professional growth and development. In a process of informed and empowered decision making; reflection is a valued concept (Grimmett & Erickson, 1991; Schon, 1987; Zeichner, 1990). As insightful interpretations occur, students can investigate professional practices by reflecting on direct experiences. Cannella and Reiff (1994) and Fosnot (1989) describe a constructivist perspective where individuals actively construct concepts by using their experiences and existing frameworks of cognitions, and reflections focus on deliberations and choices among competing versions of good teaching. Here, varieties of reflections identify new possibilities for reconstructing experiences, understanding situations, and gaining insight into the cultural milieu of teaching. The intent is to have students investigate professional practice, examine experiences, and reflect on the design and implementation of programs for young children (Babour, 1990; Doxey, 1992; Zeichner, 1983).

In his progressive theory, Dewey (1963) taught that education is not something done to people, it is something people do to themselves, and individuals selectively respond to events based on prior experiences. To be educated is to reconstruct and negotiate meanings through interpersonal interactions and experiences. Connelly and

Clandinin (1994) discuss how teacher education is essentially rethinking and rebuilding from past and current lived experiences. Other teacher educators maintain that preservice teachers utilize the knowing that comes from their past experiences to find expression in current situations (Britzman, 1991; Bullough, 1994; Clark, 1988). Denzin (1989) explains that individuals develop perceptions and beliefs through meeting, confronting, passing through, and making sense of events in their past and present lives. Within a learner-centered perspective that stresses reflection there is a need to understand the influence of personal perceptions, beliefs, and values on learning and experience (Butt, 1989; Bullough et al. 1992; Grumet, 1987).

These two perspectives of teacher preparation, as outlined in this chapter, are a means of understanding some dimensions of the complex, dynamic, and interrelated processes of becoming a teacher. At some time during their teacher preparation, preservice early childhood teachers will likely experience both perspectives, and will become more able to understand the development and learning of young children, as well as living learner-centered education for their own development and learning.

Principles of Early Childhood Education

Definitions and Principles

Historically, the perspectives on early childhood education include such theories as maturation (Gesell, 1948), development (Piaget, 1950), psychosocial learning (Erickson, 1950), behaviorism (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966), and constructionism (Papert, 1980). These theories are reflected in the models of psychometric and learner-centered education. The predominate model in use at all age levels, including early childhood, is the psychometric model, and in contrast to a learner- centered early childhood perspective is a view of classroom instruction which

aims to maximize the acquisition of quantifiable knowledge and skills. Although he does not agree with this view, Elkind (1989) is among educators who maintain that this is the dominant view practiced in our schools and advocated by a macroculture of public and bureaucratic interests. Psychometric learning is governed by a set of behavioral principles (e.g. intermittent reinforcement) and consists of the acquisition of a set of skills (e.g. decoding) that are independent of the content to be learned. From the psychometric point of view, acquired knowledge can be measured independently from the process of acquisition. Elkind discusses how the current interest in such things as thinking skills, computer programming, and reading readiness strategies reflect the belief that thought and content can be treated separately. Supporters of a psychometric approach often assume that skills, techniques, and strategies learned by children can automatically be transferred to different kinds of content. Transfer of learning does occur, but it is far from automatic and happens more readily when students are active, not passive learners (Kamii, 1985; Katz, 1991; Piaget, 1962). In a psychometric view of learning, children's ideas are usually measured against predetermined standards, and if the child's responses are unique or different they are labeled as incorrect. Creative thinking, divergent perspectives, or open-ended questions are not well tolerated by the "correct answer" proponents.

Educators as early as Frobel and the McMillans (Logan, 1960) conceived that a psychometric model was not appropriate for young children. John Dewey's (1963) work is based on the belief that education at all levels is more meaningful if learner-centered. The works of educators such as Elkind (1989), Katz (1993), and Bredekamp (1996) are direct attempts to design education that is more responsive to the developmental needs and characteristics of young children. The discussion of principles in this literature review centers on an early childhood perspective where the child is considered to be the basic subject matter for designing appropriate early childhood education (Elkind 1991). Children develop and learn as they interact with

their environment and they actively construct individual understandings and realities (Forman & Kushner, 1983; Fosnot, 1988; Kamii, 1985; Marshall, 1992). Duckworth (1986) discusses how the primary focus of early childhood education may be on how learners make sense of situations in their own way. In a learner-centered approach to early childhood education, learning and development are seen as creative and constructive processes that are integrated with the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual developmental aspects of young children.

In a conception of early childhood education where the child is the focus in the design and implementation of programs, basic principles may be proposed regarding the child's development, learning, and interpersonal interactions. The following are some examples of principles of development and learning of young children in a learner-centered perspective.

1. Children learn in individual ways and programs tend be more learner-centered than teacher directed or content specific.
2. Children are curious and learn very readily through first-hand, real, and meaningful experiences.
3. Play helps children make meaning of their experiences.
4. The development and learning of a young child can not be considered outside the context of the family and significant others in the community.
5. Facilitating opportunities for building on positive experiences may enhance a child's sense of control and empowerment.

Education of Early Childhood Learners

If each child is viewed as a unique person, and early childhood education is more sensitive to learners than teacher-directed or content-specific, children will be encouraged to learn in individual and creative ways and all aspects of their

development will be facilitated. Oppenheim (1989), Elkind (1992), and Katz (1995) have defined learner-centered education as having the driving force coming from the children. It is education where children play a more active role in making choices and building upon their experiences. The focus in learner-centered education is on the child's total development as a thinking, feeling, and social being, and when children create knowledge and discover realities for themselves, more effective learning occurs than when they are expected to meet outside standards. That is, learners are not passive observers of information, rather they constantly assimilate information into their existing modes of thought (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Elkind, 1987; Marzollo, 1988; Piaget, 1974; Oppenheim, 1989). As children are encouraged to direct their own learning, they are provided with varying and relevant opportunities from which to make choices and solve problems. Teachers can enhance and enrich the learning process, but there is no need to hurry it. Rather than instructing children in a direct manner, learning may be mediated by observing what children understand so more challenging kinds of thinking can be encouraged.

Vygotsky (1978) explains how relevant social interactions between teacher and learner lead to an enrichment of the learning process. To provide opportunities for increased learning and development, he proposes scaffolding in learning environments which allow learners increased understandings, and working within a student's zone of proximal development (providing instructions that span the region in which a learner can advance both with and without help). Positive social interactions and supportive environments assist pupils in exploring new avenues, directing their own learning, and in working with others.

The role of the teacher is to support, extend, and assist children as they define problems and find solutions. For children to understand a concept, the information needs to be meaningful, related to their experiences, and match their individual level of development (Reynolds, 1996). Teachers motivate children's intellectual, social,

emotional, physical, and creative growth when they draw on the children's interests, experiences, and interactions.

Experiential Learning

A basic principle in early childhood education explains that young children are curious and learn most easily through real and meaningful experiences. Experiential learning is rooted in the work of those who believe that all genuine education comes about through worthwhile experiences in a constructivist view of education (Dewey, 1963, Piaget, 1966). Thus one can use a constructivist approach to build upon a network of educational experiences to expand childrens' understanding. An individual perceives the next environmental situation depending on how former experiences are constructed or reconstructed.

There are some experiences, of course, that can be classified as miseducation (Elkind, 1987), and these have the effect of arresting or distorting growth. Such miseducation often occurs in schools if teachers do not appreciate children's differing approaches to learning. When there are continual demands for conformity and obedience through teacher directed programs, children seldom remain excited about learning. For example, Jenny was a precocious seven year old with extensive literary and communication skills, and when the teacher explained and repeated everything to the whole group of children, Jenny began reading or drawing. The teacher complained to an administrator that Jenny was not listening to directions and her off task behavior was inappropriate. The teacher was also concerned that such behavior might suggest non-compliance by other students, and she was determined that Jenny follow classroom procedures. The administrator suggested that this situation become an action research project with the investigation centering around Jenny's capability to read and listen to directions at the same time, and to study if her behavior was having an effect on other children. The teacher resisted the idea because she saw this situation

as Jenny's problem, but finally consented to become part of a collaborative inquiry project with the administrator. Nine times in a two week period, the administrator observed the teacher giving directions to the class. Immediately after directions were completed the class was to begin a group assignment, and the administrator discussed with Jenny her understanding of the requirements. On all occasions, Jenny was reading and appeared not to pay attention to directions, yet each time she was able to explain and complete all assignments. Her ability to deal with more than one task at once was reluctantly acknowledged by the classroom teacher and permission was given for the student to continue reading her books. During the two month period of observation no other children imitated Jenny's specific behavior. The confrontation between teacher and child was a misdirected attempt to force compliance and may have resulted in the child's lack of power over her situation. The inquiry project turned a potential miseducation situation into good practice for teacher and child

Researchers such as Elkind (1989), Hendricks (1996) and Katz (1991) describe how adults need to allow children to extract what they need from their experiences so as to extend their competence. Elkind (1989) also notes the most effective materials to use to help children learn are all around them. If children have the opportunity to interact with real objects and to build on their experiences, they usually bring meaning to their world. Adults have an obligation to acknowledge each child's interests and strengths by allowing children to be actively involved in planning learning activities. Clark (1988) explains that we need to build on, show off, and celebrate the many things children do well

Eric's Story

The following vignette about Eric which occurred in my kindergarten class is an example of what profound learning may occur in a situation that allows children to become designers of their own learning experiences. Some children enter kindergarten

with aggressive and domineering dispositions and such was Eric's nature. In his kindergarten classroom, if he fancied something in the way of play materials or space, he just took the object or pushed his way into an area. As his teacher, it did not matter what diversions I tried, or how many discussions about cooperation took place, Eric paid little heed to the boundaries of others. In this early childhood program, the children were involved in an integrated math program structured through a dramatic play area known as the kindergarten store. From a consumership perspective, the development of early math, language, and social concepts were proposed outcomes from integrated activities in this play area. Each child was given five poker chips each week as an automatic allowance, and they could use this allowance to purchase real items at the store. These items came from various charitable and retail sources and included everything from sugarless candy and stickers to real Barbie Dolls and Ninja Turtles. The prices for store items ranged from one to twenty five chips and were generally set in collaboration with the children. Each week the children could choose to spend some or all of their chips or save for a more expensive item. Almost from the beginning, Eric set his eye on the largest action toy in the store, and he quickly realized that it was going to take some weeks before he would have enough chips for the purchase. Numerous times I saw him counting and matching his chips with the number needed for the purchase, and several times I heard him telling others that he was going to buy this particular model. Finally the day arrived when enough chips were saved to buy the treasure. One last obstacle encountered was having to wait until his name came on the schedule. The children and I, initially, concluded that there was only room for three children to be in the store at one time, so each week a rotating schedule was posted and those names listed first were the first shoppers at the store. Missy, another kindergarten child with very developed social and communications skills, was one of the first names on the roster list this day. She entered the store, and without hesitating purchased Eric's intended model (she too had been saving her chips). She walked

directly to him and said, "Look what I bought at the store." I watched with bated breath for him to make a grab for the model, to fall to the floor in a full blown tantrum, or at least yell, but there was only silence. His face was an animation of surprise. Finally he quietly said, "I was going to buy that." "I know," she said. He had met his match, she had won, and it had nothing to do with wanting the model she had just purchased. Then in a most gracious manner she said, "I am going to leave it at school, and since you are my friend you can play with it anytime you want." "I like you," were the next words out of his mouth. In those few exchanges, his social interaction skills leaped a giant developmental chasm. Only a learner-centered early childhood education environment could have provided the opportunity for that quality and quantity of social-emotional and cognitive development and learning for both children

Play

Children play to bring meaning to their experiences. Segal and Segal (1989), and Wasserman (1992) have recommended that children have the chance for a diverse variety of play opportunities from which to bring meaning to their experiences. It is suggested that there are dynamic relationships between specific components of play and success in problem solving, cognitive development, interpersonal interactions and other aspects of a child's development (Bessell-Browne, 1985; Bruner, 1986; Polito, 1994; Segal & Adcock, 1995; Wasserman, 1992). Through play, a child may construct cognitive knowledge, enhance a spirit of inquiry and creativity, and reflect on initial conceptual understandings. Very few new ideas emerge from children who are in programs where they are expected to produce that which is correct or already known. In play, children are not locked into conforming to set standards. For example, when children do worksheets they are expected to conform to existing standards which reflect varying levels of success and failure, but in play there are no predetermined levels of achievement. Paley (1986) discusses how important it is to

listen to children and follow their agendas rather than imposing prescribed directions. Play is a child's agenda, and play sanctions diversity, creativity, and allows children to take psychological risks in thinking and inventing. Children are encouraged to take control, to make choices, and enjoy autonomy. Elkind (1989), Postman (1982), and Winn (1981) have written powerfully about what they describe as the disappearance of childhood. Children, because of societal trends, parental expectations, and spatial limitations have few opportunities to behave as children. Our early childhood programs need to articulate, to advocate, and to publicize learning through play so children can be afforded many opportunities to utilize their learning styles and developmental strengths.

Role of the Family in a Child's Development and Learning

The first significant environment for a child is provided by the family. As a child's first teacher, parents help him/her to develop language and ideas about the world. Bronfenbrenner (1979) recognized that the development of young children cannot be considered outside the context of the family and community. Current thinking suggests that although young children are vulnerable, these early years also represent a period of opportunity for parents and early childhood professionals to facilitate and mediate development and learning (Kaman, 1989; Schweinhart, 1994). Getting young children off to a good start, preventing problems before they begin, and strengthening families and communities are concepts that reflect our current sociocultural view about what is wise and just for children and families.

Researchers such as Burke (1985), Elkind (1995), Krasnow (1992), and Paulus (1991) have discussed how children's learning is enhanced by having parents involved in the implementation of early childhood programs. Arrowsmith (1992), Baskwill (1989), Moore and Littlejohn (1992), and Sinclair (1992) have addressed the importance of family/school interactions with the understanding and practice that all of

the parties involved are equal and empowered partners. The goals and objectives of a school-home partnership require a sensitivity to the uniqueness and diversity of families, mutually supportive attitudes, inquiry oriented approaches to concerns, and information sharing activities.

A paradigm shift is occurring in which researchers are advocating that all children have the opportunity for success in the school and the necessity of parent involvement in achieving such success is recognized (Howard, Williams, Port, & Lepper, 1997). The family/school partnership can introduce flexibility and participation into a school's hierarchical structure, and families can be empowered through various activities that bring parents and teachers together more often. Collaboration between families and schools means that the aim of parent involvement in the school is not only to inform parents, but may also provide mutual support, especially in diverse cultural or ethnic situations. Communication can be created between home and school, and parents can be an integral part of the school environment by becoming more involved in the decision making (Krasnow, 1992; Sinclair, 1992; Swap, 1991). Efforts to communicate may prosper in a partnership environment and confrontation and blame can be given a chance to be resolved. Allexsaht-Snider (1992) explores disparities and issues in the nature of schooling from the perspective of teachers and parents and reports that, owing to different perspectives, parents and teachers often view problems and solutions in very different ways. Don Holdaway addressed this incongruity nearly two decades ago.

> It is astonishing that the same parents who supported their child's learning of speech with such good sense so often act in a completely opposite and destructive manner when the child begins to have difficulties with reading and writing. Of course, we must accept that they learned to act in such a way from their own schooling, and that probably, as teachers, much of what we do in teaching stems from the same sources. (Holdaway, 1979, p.189)

Building Confidence

In early childhood programs the parent/school team can be instrumental in providing opportunities for continuity of positive experiences at home and school resulting in an increasing sense of confidence in young children. As adults, we know that not everything we do will work, but we understand that nothing works if we don't try, and when we take action and are successful we develop feelings of confidence. Though children may think differently than adults, they have the same feelings and by taking risks and experiencing success they have the opportunity to develop their confidence, motivation, responsibility, initiative, and caring (Sheridan, 1991). There is a need for respectful treatment from adults to build a child's self-confidence, self respect, and respect for others. Also, Corroro and Turner (1985) report that self-confidence is a predictor of academic success. Therefore, it is essential that educators be sensitive to the needs and interests of individual children and build on their strengths.

Summary of Learner-Centered Education

Preservice early childhood teachers need to be given opportunities to assimilate and/or accommodate the principles of early childhood education such as those discussed above and to have access to knowledge, experiences, and models which can support the design, implementation, and evaluation of early childhood education. However, current literature suggests that the education of preservice teachers is not guided by the conscious application of theoretical knowledge (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). According to such studies as SEE, or the Study of the Education of Educators (Edmundson, 1990; Sirotnik, 1990), professors of education most frequently take the role of expert, delivering primary information by lecturing or explaining theoretical knowledge for a greater part of the class. A shift is taking place in some teacher education programs, and preservice

teachers are expected to learn how to design appropriate education for young children not only by learning sound early childhood principles, but by also experiencing learner-centered teacher education. For example, preservice teachers will not only intellectualize about the principles of early childhood education but there will be opportunities to reflect on their development and understanding about effective learning, and they will be encouraged to explore how principles of early childhood teaching can be constructed and reconstructed from their beliefs, perceptions, and experiences. (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Beattie, 1995; Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Fang, 1996; Fenstermacher, 1986)

The following section will develop the idea that preservice teachers gain a better understanding of learner-centered education for young children when being immersed in learner-centered teacher education. Some concepts of learner-centered teacher education such as reflective practices, empowerment, and collaboration will be emphasized, and the effects of personal and social qualities on teacher education will be discussed as they differ from the effects of traditional and technical aspects of teacher education.

Building on Knowledge of Early Childhood Teachers

> The teacher's attitudes, beliefs, teaching style, and mode of interaction will permeate the entire program and influence the behavior of the children. Thus teachers need to be aware of their own personal behaviors and beliefs (Blakey & Everett Turner, 1991).

Principles For Designing Learner-Centered Teacher Education

Teaching is a complex, situational, and dilemma-ridden endeavor. Therefore, an important aspect of teacher preparation is to encourage opportunities for exploring

and questioning current educational theories and practices. Many teacher educators recognize that it is not sufficient just to prepare beginning teachers to teach in a technical, rational manner. From past and current experiences, preservice teachers develop their own principles about the design and implementation of early childhood programs, and they need to learn how to interpret and build upon their own experiences and to become involved in directing their own learning and development (Bullough, 1991; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Eisner, 1990; Pinar, 1980).

Reflective practices integrate reflection with action, and although experience is a basis for learning, reflection is an essential aspect of the learning process because it results in constructing meanings from experiences. Students usually see their teachers as the knowers or custodians of all knowledge and, given this perception, they do not often think critically about what they learn or question what the teachers teach. In order to counter this dependence on authority, reflective practices are proposed to help preservice teachers to become critical thinkers about their practice. Reflective practices not only provide a means for reconstructing experiences and articulating learning, but reflection is a goal for discovering ways of knowing.

Having teachers interpret their own endeavors through reflection is not a new idea (Dewey, 1963), but it was not widely acknowledged until Schon (1983) began to write about reflective practice in education and other professions. The term "reflection" is used by those who believe in the importance of critical and interpretive thinking and helps distinguish between knowledge being given to the teacher in contrast to the teachers' own interpretation of their experiences. Zeichner and Liston (1987) maintain that experience, as embodied in one's personal biography, constitutes both the content and consequences of reflective thinking and the shaping and restructuring of personal knowledge about learning and teaching. Reflection begins with one's observations. These observations, in turn, suggest possible courses of action. Thus, reflection involves both looking back and looking ahead. Program

components that are believed to foster reflective thinking include such things as conversations, active participation, journal writing, and collaborative educational planning. When knowing is seen as a process in which the knower participates, a passion for learning may develop and emotional and rational dimensions of thought become integrated in connected, holistic ways. Piaget (1974) maintains that to understand is to invent, and students using reflective practices may become creators of knowledge.

Reflective practices have disadvantages to be taken into account as teacher preservice programs promote reflection. For example, reflective practices are time consuming and may involve psychosocial risks as the questioning of practice requires preservice teachers to be open to an examination of their own beliefs, values, and dispositions about which they may be sensitive (Imel, 1992; Rose, 1992). Also, reflection without an understanding of what constitutes good teaching practice may lead to a repetition of mistakes, and reflection without philosophical awareness can lead to a preoccupation with techniques (Lasley, 1989). Skills cannot be acquired separate from context, and in the reflective process there are dilemmas of process versus content, balancing student and teacher needs, and achieving an equilibrium between action and reflection. Vavrus and Ozcan (1996) maintain that reflective teacher education in its current stage of development may fail to overcome dominant historical ideologies which deny such perspectives as multiculturalism, feminism, and hermeneutic principles of interpretation. There is increasing work being done to counterbalance the effects of the weaknesses and traditional thoughts in reflective practices, and in this study I assume that the application of sound concepts about reflective practices are a very important foundation in teacher preparation.

An apprenticeship model of teacher education which evolves from hierarchical structures, didactic teaching, or observations of others may inhibit growth that is personal and individual. In contrast, a teacher education program oriented toward the

goals of reflective thinking and development can encourage more effective practice in a field characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and variety. Dewey (1963) maintains that reflective thought is purposeful, directed, and intent on understanding and creating meaning from interactions or realizations. Thus, preservice teachers who learn how to reflect about their teaching decisions are more likely to become life-long learners (Heflich & Iran-Nejad, 1995). Reflective thinking furthers an orientation toward open-mindedness, responsibility, and skills of observation and analysis (Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Preservice teachers are viewed as having unique knowledge and skills and are active participants in their own learning process (Cannella & Reiff, 1994). In reflective teacher preparation programs, students may be given opportunities to pose problems, seek solutions, create resources, and conduct interdisciplinary research projects. Other processes of learning may also be explored and experienced by individual students.

Reflective thinking for preservice teachers is not always an easy concept to apply. For example, Gore and Zeichner (1991) examined the amount of reflection manifested by a cohort of student teachers as they completed a program designed to promote inquiry and reflection. Despite the nature and objectives of the teacher education program, little evidence of reflection was observed and the reflective activities which were documented consisted of technical rationality. Technical rationality is where educators accept packaged educational techniques or strategies as the basis of their classroom instruction and products, processes, and educational contexts are not treated as problematic. This is also considered to be the lowest form of reflection (van Manen, 1977). Other research projects have identified examples of this form of reflection and have discovered that, at this level of reflection, preservice teachers almost exclusively focus on self in the situation rather than on others (Bullough, 1991; Wodlinger, 1985).

Bennett (1991) and Laboskey (1994) discuss a continuum of reflectivity in preservice and student teachers which progresses from a focus on self to pedagogical thinking where a knowledge of children and the moral aspects of teaching is demonstrated. By seeking confirmation of their beliefs and images, and by conceptualizing their own identity, these students begin to turn their focus outward and concentrate on what and how pupils are learning. With this rationale, it would seem that education students would not reach the next level of reflectivity until they begin working with pupils and in schools during field-based projects and/or practicums. This conclusion would fit into van Manen's (1977) second level of reflectivity where educational assumptions and consequences are used to make decisions regarding practical activity. Based on their research, Chen and Seng (1992) maintain that the level of reflective thinking for both undergraduate and graduate level student teachers begins at a low level, but those with more subject matter knowledge, skills, or work experience (e.g., graduate level students) improve their reflection skills at a faster rate.

A third level of critical reflection suggested by van Manen (1977) incorporates a moral and ethical dimension into the notion of reflective thinking. At this level the central focus is derived from the educational goals, experiences, and activities which are mediated by concerns for justice, equity, and practical action. Here the aspects of teaching are viewed as problematic with choices and decisions to be made among competing versions of good practice.

Students construct knowledge and understand their own realities by interpreting past and current lived experiences, and as reflective learners, they continuously question, investigate, and negotiate meanings in their educational context. New constructions are generated, new understandings emerge, and personal insights into learning create openness, flexibility, and comprehension in terms of the learning of others. Students need to reflect on their own perceptions, beliefs, and

ethical attitudes, and as they articulate and understand their own processes of learning, they begin to develop an understanding and sensitivity for the learning of others (Belenky, et al., 1986). Cannella and Reiff (1994) maintain that there is no magic formula for encouraging learning through reflection, but through reflective practices, preservice teachers may develop the belief that they are respected, worthwhile, and trusted. Varrus and Ozcarr(1996) state that as reflective learners are encouraged to explore and express different ways of knowing, they may come to have a greater understanding and sensitivity to the needs of children.

Empowered Learners

Learning is an active process, and learners construct concepts when placed in environments that allow for exploration and decision making (Cannella & Reiff, 1994, Fosnot, 1989). Knowledge is constructed by building on previous experiences and, therefore, is different for each student. The view of human beings as concept creators can lead to principles for learning where knowledge is created by each individual through processes such as self-regulation, adaptation, assimilation and/or accommodation, construction and/or reconstruction of experiences, and the generation of new concepts.

The term empowerment has become an increasingly important concept in educational literature (Aitken, 1993, Bigelow, 1990, Miller, 1990, Redding, 1990, Rice, 1987, Sleeter, 1991, Sprague, 1992). Earlier conceptions of empowering others through education can be found in the work of Dewey (1963) and Friere (1970). Dewey believes that the fundamental purpose of education is to prepare learners to effectively exercise democratic and social reform. Friere concludes that the traditional method of instructing students to absorb information promotes a hierarchical order and establishes a relational gulf between students and teachers which disempowers the student. McQuillan (1995) is concerned that faculties may give students power and

responsibility, but little is done to help them think about how they will use this power Empowerment of the learner is a moral responsibility if learners are to decide on the most effective course of action for developing their ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed. Shulman and Luechauer (1991) developed the following guidelines for a learning paradigm that is empowering for students.

1. The quality of the work to be done and the time needed to do the work are discussed with students.
2. Expectation for the work to be accomplished are clear.
3. Students are continually asked for their input concerning ways to demonstrate quality performance.
4. Students assess their own work.
5. Instructors are viewed as facilitators to see that everything possible is done to provide students with the best learning conditions.

Short (1992) has proposed dimensions of empowerment that add to the above guidelines and may become a framework for empowering learners.

1. Students are guided to participate in critical decisions that directly affect their learning.
2. Empowerment is viewed as the impact students have on influencing school life.
3. As students are empowered in their own learning they feel more status and regard for themselves in the student role.
4. Students have autonomy which places them in control of many aspects of their learning.
5. Students recognize and display that learning is continuous and goes beyond the skills of the individual assignment.

6. Students perceive themselves as having the ability to learn through being involved in the design and implementation of their own educational programs.

Empowering learners may be defined as the process whereby learners develop the competence to resolve their own problems and take charge of their learning. When learner-centered teacher education programs provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge through such strategies as problem solving, action research, shared conversations, reflective journals, portfolios, and authentic assessment tools, then learners are more likely to feel empowered. Those who seek to empower students are limited only by their own creativity, contextual appropriateness, and belief that students possess the requisite skills, experiences, desire, or knowledge to take control and accept the responsibility for their own learning (Shulman & Luechauer, 1991).

Being empowered by others is only one aspect of learning to make wise choices from a myriad of possibilities. To make good decisions, students must not only be allowed to make choices, but must also be able to see the other side of the question or concern. Rather than reacting to situations, students must feel their own power or stand in their own power to see the views of others. They must be able to see all perspectives and directions, and they must be able to observe, listen, and have the professional judgment to know what to do next.

Just as early childhood preservice teachers are expected to understand how to provide for the development and learning of their future pupils, teacher educators need to understand how to provide for empowered, reflective learners enrolled in their teacher preparation programs. Education students need to have power over their contexts (Blakey, 1996). Helping them know what it is like to stand in their own power may or may not weaken the desire to have power over others, but students can only give to others that which they have already acquired. Reflections on power over

situations and the ramifications of this dimension will set the stage for active, constructive, reflective, and collaborative learners.

A Personal Perspective Of Teacher Education

One of the most underestimated aspects in teacher education is the participation of the prospective teacher in his/her own learning. The perceptions, beliefs, and values which education students bring to their preparation need to be identified, acknowledged, and used as an integral part of their learning and development. Perspectives may be viewed as a combination of beliefs and behaviors which characterize the conception of the learner's social world. Students can be encouraged to use their own voice and to develop a deeper understanding of how their perceptions and beliefs can influence both their learning and their understanding of experience (Bruner, 1988; Bullough, 1994; Butt, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Bronfenbrenner (1979), Lanier and Little (1986), and Sumsion (1994) argue that those who have the opportunity to make choices and be self-directed in their own learning are more likely to use initiative, thought, and independent judgment in other areas. These empowered individuals are also more likely to monitor their own professional growth, have a deeper understanding of how to interact with their environment, and are more able to reconstruct experiences when approaching problem solving situations. Three conditions which appear critical for self-directed learning in teacher education is summarized in the work of Jones (1986) and Sutton (1987). First, self-directed activities and assignments need to reflect the complexity found in elementary and secondary classrooms. Jones (1986) believes that people who are going to become teachers of young children should be taught in the same way they will teach. If early childhood programs are based on a classroom model in which children choose the majority of their activities, then preservice teachers need opportunities to make good choices. For example, Jones describes how in the

beginning of her teacher education classes she plans times for observing and interacting with individual students, just as she would with young children. She sets up the environment so students will have things to do, not only reading, writing, observing, and participating in class activities, but opportunities to make choices concerning what to read, where to observe, and how to represent learning. Katz (1993) maintains that teacher education courses should allow students to experience principles which they must follow when working with young children. If we listen to children to gain insights into designing programs (Paley, 1986), then listening to preservice teachers may lead to insights, concerns, and perceptions which can be used in teacher education. Goodlad's (1990) research reveals that education students spend much of their time listening to lectures, but very little time is spent in personalized and alternate ways of learning.

A second condition that may have an effect on preservice teachers' development and learning is supervision. Close supervision seems to restrict the degree of self-direction possible, although freedom from close supervision does not necessarily mean that preservice teachers will feel free to use initiative, thought, or independent judgment in their development. In order to promote the cognitive and/or social growth of students, they must be given varying degrees of freedom in regards to their own learning. There is variability across classes, but many students perceive that instructors in preservice education control the goals and the delivery system.

Theories of education often generalize about some of the ways in which preservice teachers are alike, so a third condition suggests that this must be balanced by looking at individuals. Providing opportunities for interaction between students may assist in providing for equity and diversity in small groups. If students are asked to list things that they wish to discuss during class time, it is very important to follow up and make sure this happens. Maintaining a reflective journal for written dialogue between student and instructor can encourage a more open expression of beliefs and

perceptions. There is, however, a need for clarity of expectations so students will feel secure enough to trust the instructor, themselves, and each other (Butt, 1991, Grumet, 1980, Jones, 1986)

Beliefs and Perceptions of Preservice Educators

At one time it was believed that if effective teacher education instruction was described, programs could be designed to promote effective practices (Brophy & Good, 1986, Doyle & Duncan, 1977, Johnson, 1992). However, with the diversity of research designs being used today, there is a growing trend to investigate the personal qualities and views of individual preservice teachers. What do preservice teachers perceive, believe, and value in their education? Preservice teachers hold many perceptions and beliefs, both implicitly and explicitly, about students, curriculum, and pedagogy. These perceptions and beliefs act as a filter through which many decisions and judgments about educational practice are determined (Ashton, 1990, Duffy & Andrews, 1984, Deford, 1985, Fang, 1996). The family, the school, the university, and society in general all influence students' past and current perceptions and beliefs about teaching. Furthermore, these factors influence the knowledge which students' assimilate as they develop their role as teachers.

The beliefs and perceptions students have developed about teaching as a result of their long immersion as pupils in their particular school culture may have a profound influence on their view of teaching (Butt, 1988, Fang, 1996, Lortie, 1975). These beliefs are influenced by many factors such as previous schooling, their family and other early childhood experiences, opportunity for reflection on preservice theory and practice, and life experiences. As preservice teachers begin field-based activities in teacher education, their beliefs and perceptions are transferred into various forms of practice (adoption of control measures, expectation of students performance, and/or implementation of various theories). Regardless of the forms taken, these beliefs and

perceptions affect teaching and learning in one way or another. However, the formal education received in teacher education programs may or may not be an influential factor in developing or deterring preservice teacher's beliefs about pedagogical practice. In a personalized perspective, where preservice teachers have individual choice and decision making opportunities, and they are encouraged to identify and articulate their beliefs and perceptions, they may begin to see how their personal qualities and experiences influence their development and leaning.

Bullough and Gitlin (1995), Butt, Yamagishi, and Chow (1992), and Kagan (1992) observe that, for the most part, teacher education has ignored the biographical accounts and personal beliefs and perceptions that prospective teachers bring to teacher education. Their past and current experiences can be a useful means of identifying beginning teachers perceptions about teaching and their roles as future teachers. For example, Clark (1988) and Calderhead and Robson (1991) explored the particular beliefs and perceptions of teaching that are held by education students and came to understand that these characteristics primarily come from their experiences as pupils. This apprenticeship of observation is powerful, rich, and yet incomplete since the students' focus over the years may be on what is seen externally of teaching (Lortie, 1975). For example, those who were exposed to teacher directed practices throughout their school years may quite naturally have developed the belief that teaching involves the teacher as information giver and the student as receiver. These same students usually carry the model of their earlier experience into their teacher preparation classes, expecting their instructors to lecture about good teaching. In turn, when these students enter a classroom to teach for the first time, chances are they will set up situations in which they can present information to students in a teacher directed manner.

Preservice teachers frequently begin their teacher education program with a belief in their ability to teach. They may have unrealistic optimism about their future

teaching performance and may lack an appreciation of the complexity and uncertainty of teaching-learning relationships (Book, Byers, & Freeman, 1983; Weinstein, 1990). Also, education students may be faced with conflicts between their existing beliefs and perceptions, the views of professors who are acknowledged experts, and the practices of teachers in the field. In any faculty of education there may be several very plausible views of good teaching, and some of these may be in conflict with the beliefs that preservice teachers hold or which is observed by preservice teachers in field-based assignments.

There are consistencies and inconsistencies between the stated beliefs, implicit theoretical frameworks, and field-based experiences of preservice teachers. Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) and Rupley and Logan (1984) agree that elementary teachers' beliefs about teaching affect their instructional decision making and classroom practice. For example, Wing's (1989) research indicates that early childhood teachers' theoretical beliefs about development not only influence their instructional practices, but also shape young children's perceptions of constructs. The thinking of teachers about their roles, beliefs, and values helps shape their pedagogy, especially, as teachers teach in accordance with their theoretical beliefs. However, other studies have shown inconsistency in teachers' beliefs and the decisions they make in their practice (Duffy & Anderson, 1984; Readence, Konopak, & Wilson, 1991). This inconsistency is not unexpected as earlier research indicated that contexts can constrain teachers abilities to attend to their beliefs and provide instruction which matches with their beliefs (Duffy, 1982; Roechler & Duffy, 1991). This suggests that contextual factors can have a powerful influence on teachers beliefs and, ultimately, classroom practice. As previously discussed, preservice teachers hold implicit and explicit perceptions and beliefs about students, curriculum, and teaching responsibilities which may influence their reactions to teacher education classes and to their field-based experiences. When contextual landscapes are considered, together

with the preservice teachers' perceptions and beliefs, then there is a greater potential for development and learning.

Concluding Statements

Concepts of teaching and learning are developed by a continuous process of constructing and reconstructing experiences to reveal the influence of past experiences on the present (Bullough, 1993; Butt 1991; Grumet, 1987). Dewey (1963) teaches that only by extracting the meaning of each present experience will we be prepared for future learning, and there is a continual search to uncover implicit perceptions for the purpose of guiding learning and teaching. Grumet (1987) views experience as a context for knowledge and believes individuals are educated to the extent they are conscious of their experiences, and to this degree they are allowed, by this knowledge, to act comfortably in their world. Experience can be transformed into present learning by students who see themselves as responsible for their own learning, and teacher education needs to provide avenues for students to understand the perceptions, values, and qualities which they bring to their education.

The following chapter will outline how the landscapes in which preservice teachers find themselves influence their perspectives of teacher education.

Chapter 3

Landscapes That Affect Teacher Preparation

Introduction

> We want to make the case that it is not only in understanding teacher knowledge and the education of teachers that will make a difference but attention to the professional knowledge contexts in which teachers live and work... professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p.24)

As learner-centered teacher education removes some of the traditional boundaries of control by institutions and traditional teacher educators, the effects of attributes and backgrounds of professional knowledge landscapes need to be considered. According to The Oxford English Dictionary (1995), landscapes are perceptions of surroundings while contexts are those things outside of the individual which help explain meanings. Learner-centered perspectives of teacher education not only are focused on the development and learning of preservice teachers but how educational contexts are influential in this process. The notion of landscapes in a social and cultural sense can assist in contrasting the empowerment and power of preservice teachers with the contexts of bureaucratic power and control of traditional teacher educators. Preservice teachers are constantly being confronted in their teacher education with a variety of social and cultural contexts. For example, they often use the notion of cultural teaching myths as a way of making sense of competing values or contradictory information as they begin to be socialized into the practitioner's role. These myths and misconceptions may neutralize the knowledge acquired through teacher education programs, and to counter these effects, students need to become knowledgeable about perceptual landscapes as they construct and reconstruct their

experiences. The notion of landscapes provides an image of impressionistic and open-ended personal and professional expectations, interactions, and influences. In this chapter, the landscapes in teacher education are embedded in various cultural myths as outlined by theorists such as Britzman (1986), Ediger (1990), and Howe (1986), as well as presented in the social-emotional climates of preservice education.

Cultural Myths

The definition of a myth is that the collective opinion about something is overgeneralized, based on false assumptions, or is a product of fallacious reasoning. Cultural myths that give rise to issues and concerns of teacher education are many and varied. These myths range from preservice teachers being more interested in student achievement than in higher starting salaries (Marlow, 1987) to preservice teachers not being prepared to teach the basics of academic achievement (Rosenholtz, 1989). Three frequently discussed myths concerning preservice education are outlined in this initial discussion, although other myths may be discovered in the grounded experiences of preservice teachers. Myths selected as examples in this chapter include the perceived lack of importance that surrounds teacher education, the preparation of neophyte teachers who are charged to reform the educational system, and the encompassing fear which surrounds the preservice teacher's need to be in control of the class.

Myth #1. Teacher Education Lacks Importance

One of the most prevailing educational myths is that the content and processes of teacher education courses are not considered important for practice. The issues surrounding this myth may include a perceived irrelevance of teacher preparation by practitioners and a contempt of education courses by some students and faculty from other disciplines. Those such as the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force (1986) are among the groups who began a discussion in the United States about

how teacher educators were not adequately preparing future teachers. From such sources, there was a call for the end of education as a major in undergraduate degree programs and reform proposals were suggested. For example, some said that by students' obtaining their first degree in an academic discipline, they would be more knowledgeable, or combining a full year internship in the schools after their professional post baccalaureate study would make them more effectively prepared for the classroom. A question that remains unanswered by these reports is why there is so much blind faith and belief in the benefits of a liberal arts education for potential education students. Bloom (1987) and Hirsch (1987) both condemn liberal arts education as producing cultural illiterates, and Westerman (1989) reports that professional education, not general education studies, consistently show a positive relationship to effective teaching in schools.

In our society there is a lack of consensus about the kind of teacher we want to emerge from teacher preparation programs. Lortie (1975) refers to an apprenticeship of observation which means that nearly all people in our society have many hours of observing teachers leading to a misconception that everyone knows something about how teachers should teach. Also, there is disagreement among researchers about the best processes and content of teacher preparation. Debates range from teacher education programs with a learner-centered focus (Elkind, 1987; Jones, 1986; Texas Learner Centered Proficiencies, 1995) to those traditional teacher education programs where students, for the most part, are taught through direct instruction. There are some in the macroculture who complain that newly certified teachers are unprepared to effectively teach children, and there is a tendency to blame teacher educators for things not getting better in the schools. For example, teachers seem to be held more and more accountable for the low standardized test scores of their pupils, but many variables over which the teacher has little control also affect these scores.

Traditionally, education courses have not received the recognition in academia that are awarded to courses in many other disciplines. The Bar Harbor Colloquium (Marsh, 1986) describes how many teachers in private and parochial schools, at both elementary and secondary levels, have never taken an education course nor majored in education, yet parents will pay fantastic sums for the privilege of having their children taught by these teachers. For too many years, teacher education has been the subject of ridicule, not entirely warranted to be sure, but certainly not without some basis. According to the Bar Harbor Colloquium, there have been too many teacher education programs developed across North America with the primary emphasis on teacher education as vocational training. The proliferation of teacher education programs may have resulted in the impression that the development of many of these programs has been more for the employment of faculty members in schools of education than for preparing teachers for American schools. Robert K. Koff, Dean of the School of Education at (NYU) New York State University, discusses how more than 70% of all institutions of higher education across North America provide programs leading to teacher certification, but many of these programs are not even regionally accredited. In many of these institutions, the faculty do no research, as 80% of the educational research published in North America is accounted for by faculty employed in about 30% of the leading degree granting universities (Marsh, 1986). Although organized 30 years earlier, it was not until the late 1980's that the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the American Association for Colleges for Teacher Education in the United States (AACTE) began to strengthen national standards for certification. One wonders why this was not undertaken until such a late date given the continuing complaints about the poor track records of some departments of education in preparing professionals. This is not to say there are not some exceptional education departments and excellent education professors who are designing and implementing programs for preservice teachers as empowered learners

and who understand processes of personal and professional concept construction, first for themselves and consequently for students in their classrooms (Fosnot, 1989, Fullan,1997). Although influenced by the United States, the Canadian system for educating preservice teachers has fared somewhat better as the locus of control of education has been centered in the provinces. For example, The Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS) is a model of quality standards, expectations, and cooperating influences for educating teachers in Alberta.

Myth #2: Preservice Teachers Are Encouraged To Be Innovative in Their Practicums

Shaker and Ulrich (1987) discuss how preservice teacher preparation in the disciplines may be the mandated responsibility of an academic division, but preparation in pedagogy is the province of teacher educators. The responsibility for preparing teachers to teach children has been expanded to include the expectations of beginning teachers to introduce exciting, new, and innovative ideas to the school. Researchers such as Grossman and Richett (1988) believe that a student teacher's conceptions of subject matter and general pedagogical knowledge are positively influenced by university professional course work while other research studies confirm the notion that teacher education programs seem to have little influence on developing the preconceived belief systems of a student (Britzman, 1986, Goodman, 1988, Hollingsworth, 1989, Gore & Zeichner, 1990). Wubbles (1992) reaffirms the idea that even with the many strategies proposed to integrate theoretical and practical components in teacher education perhaps none have successfully bridged the perceived problematic gap. More specifically, the impact of many teacher education programs on the attitudes and behaviors of student teachers is less than expected, thus affecting few innovative practices when the beginning teacher reaches the classroom. In part, neophyte teachers may not implement alternative ways of practice into the classroom

as they are convinced by a cooperating teacher to conduct a class in much the same way as the experience was modeled by the cooperating teacher

The gap between theory and practice is frequently discussed as the difficulty in preparing preservice teachers to apply innovations in school based practice. This viewpoint has been criticized by those such as Fenstermacher (1986) who argue that it is the task of researchers to produce knowledge. The benefit of this knowledge for practice might be viewed as the improvement it affects on the logic used by beginning teachers or, as Wubbles (1992) explains, given the premise of abstract and concrete realities, then one of the tasks of teacher educators is to adapt the language of theory in such a way that it becomes easier to use when thinking about practical situations. Perhaps some teacher educators, as well as their students, may have unrealistic expectations regarding the transfer of theoretical innovations and philosophies into field-based experiences without understanding the effect of the many cognitive, cultural, and social landscapes present in any environment.

Clark (1988), Rodriguiez (1993), and Weinstein (1990) maintain that student teachers enter practicum experiences with knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions that are deeply rooted in their past and current experiences. While the university speaks to students through the language of persuasion, students listen with the language of perception. Because of this difference in language, preservice teachers perceive that their university courses are not preparing them to teach in the classroom (Mayer, 1981), and they quickly become socialized into the school's present conceptions of practice. Thus, to expect beginning teachers to affect any innovative practice in their schools is unrealistic because they are still struggling to understand the relationship between theory and perceived practice.

Mayer (1981) suggests that the possibilities of new ideas being brought into schools by preservice teachers and/or newly prepared teachers may be severely limited by the belief that theory has no direct relevance to pedagogical problems and

that what is really needed are practical ideas and strategies for classroom instruction However, as reconstruction comes through a sense-making process related to the individual teacher, there will be opportunities for innovation and negotiation of theory Simply giving knowledge and theory to new-to-be-teachers will make little difference in bridging the gap between theory and practice (Bruffee, 1993), nor will preservice teachers be able to apply theory by just placing preservice teachers as apprentices in practical situations. Human relationships are crucial to the learning and teaching process (Bruner, 1990), and only if all participants in the educational process are equally accepted as partners will neophyte teachers be encouraged to exert their own power in new teaching situations.

Myth #3: Preservice Teachers Learn To Control

One interesting myth about preservice teacher education originates from the misconception that an effective teacher must be solely in control of all aspects of teaching the students, the curriculum, and the classroom environment (Britzman, 1986, Kleinsasser, 1991, Popkewitz, 1984). If control is not apparent, the teacher may be judged as lacking professional competence or, at best, lacking control over the behavior of the students. The following example explains how a teacher may be expected to control all aspects of a classroom environment. Rene was a first year teacher in a self-contained classroom of lively and bright second graders. In this class, several children experienced learning and social difficulties. After an initial period of trying to cope with the situation, she invited the school principal into the class for advice and assistance. Unfortunately, beginning teacher development was not an area in which the principal wanted to spend much school funding. Further, this particular administrator had neither the expertise to assist in the development of individual children nor the teaching skills to support the young teacher. After many appeals for assistance, the young teacher was told she was ultimately responsible for not applying

the necessary strategies to manage the class, and it was suggested that she resign her position. Although a somewhat simplistic version of the myth of the beginning teacher as expert, it illustrates the point. Whatever the situation, many preservice teachers fear they lack the skills to control classroom behavior and fear this inability to control is the ultimate test of their effectiveness in the classroom.

One approach used to measure the effectiveness of a teacher's control of curriculum content is to compare achievement test scores of their students to standardized benchmarks. Although these tests are intended to measure student achievement, if students do not perform well, the results are often reflected back to the teacher's competency. This practice of judging teachers by their students' test scores often results in teachers being over-concerned about students' performance on tests, and often leads to a more teacher directed curriculum and a focus on instilling isolated bits of knowledge rather than providing meaningful experiences. It can be very unsettling for preservice teachers to be faced with large groups of children in practicums, and they worry that they may succeed or fail based on their ability to manage all classroom variables. To them, it seems to be the "sink or swim" model of becoming a successful, practicing teacher as they perceive a lack of support systems.

Student teaching experiences are often influenced by a model of apprenticeship which is well established in the culture of teaching (Kleinsasser, 1991). The problem for student teachers in these situations is two-fold. First, their memories from their own school experiences may emphasize that teachers need to learn to control everything in the classroom, and second, as preservice teachers they may be coached in their practicums to believe that without teacher-directed control little learning will take place. One way to explore this tradition of control is to examine those socializing influences from the past and current lived experiences of preservice teachers in which they have experienced directed instruction. If preservice teachers do not understand their own learning processes, they will likely not understand and provide for the

learning experiences of individual children in their classrooms. That is, in most autocratic situations children will do what is asked, but their needs or interests are rarely addressed, their choices are limited, and they are seldom allowed to initiate ideas which are of interest to them. As the teacher becomes more controlling and directive, a power struggle can occur and opportunities for students to become self-directed in their own learning is lost (Knowles, 1992).

Britzman (1986) explains that when everything depends on the teacher, the teacher's role may become primarily confined to controlling the situation. It is the teacher as "technician" who is exerting institutional authority and/or trying to meet expectations which may have little to do with the children. This is not the same as a teacher having autonomy in a professional sense (Goodlad, 1990). Professionals need autonomy to engage children in creating a curriculum, pedagogy, and environment which will provide appropriate learning opportunities. This autonomy will not be achieved if the creativeness of teachers or preservice teachers is rarely recognized or rewarded, or if those in authority are giving directives and evaluating programs while rarely building on strengths of practitioners and children.

There is a need to involve prospective teachers in more personalized ways of understanding and creating sound educational understandings. The awareness of educational myths with their incongruencies, misconceptions, and issues may provide a very important opportunity for preservice teachers to deal with aspects of teaching that have little to do with learner-centered education. In addition, good teaching strategies and subject matter knowledge, although important, are only a part of the total picture of teacher preparation. The following section in this chapter discusses the influence of teaching climate as an important aspect in influencing education.

Teaching Climate

A teacher affects eternity: he can never tell where his influence stops

Henry Adams (1931)

Moral Values

Teaching climate is an integral aspect of an educational landscape, and the moral responsibility of making good and right decisions is a continual concern of preservice teachers. Many of the courses prospective teachers are expected to master are concerned with general education requirements and/or educational theory, but to make important choices about education requires moral values and ethical principles which are too rarely discussed. In the recent past, there has been little emphasis placed on the articulation of moral values and character traits due, in part, to a lack of consensus about whose values should be taught. Goodlad (1990), Harris (1990), Thompson (1991), and Wilcox and Ebbs (1992) note that society, in general, and education, in particular, are in a period of moral confusion and educators are being requested to renew their leadership roles in teaching and modeling qualities that are "virtuous", "just", "right", and "good". The process of rethinking principles of good conduct is being reintroduced into our education systems, and individuals such as Bullough (1988) and Clark (1988) propose that cultivation of civic, democratic, and moral responsibilities in education be recognized as fundamental.

Personal values, such as integrity and authenticity, are recognized as being at the core of teaching. The Oxford English Dictionary (1995) defines integrity as a moral principle which is demonstrated in someone who is upright, honest, whole, or sound. According to Kirkhorn (1981), integrity relies on idealism based on social necessity and professional responsibility. The following story about an assistant principal may enhance our appreciation of integrity of school as a social and political

context. In the school in which she was the assistant principal, the principal allowed the secretary to decide on the class placements of children. When some of her decisions were made for political reasons and not in the best interest of the children, these placements were questioned by teaching staff. The secretary gave an extraordinary explanation regarding her decisions, but even more surprisingly, these fabrications were supported by the principal which resulted in the teaching staff becoming polarized regarding parameters of authority. The assistant principal encouraged individual staff members to communicate their concerns and frustrations and it soon became evident to all that she was objective and would treat the concerns of staff members confidentially and with anonymity. This assistant principal's moral principles of fairness, honesty, and justice were a stabilizing influence on the staff, although her own administrative position was affected as a result of this moral stand and she was asked to return to the classroom in a non-administrative position.

Educators such as this assistant principal, stand out not only because of their skills and proficiency as teachers, but also for their principles and moral outlook. The Oxford English Dictionary (1995) describes authentic individuals as those who are trustworthy and genuine. If you are genuine, you are exactly what you claim, and if you are trustworthy, you act reliably. Morrison (1994) identifies an authentic educator as one who demonstrates what he or she values. In the above situation, the assistant principal believes that political manipulations and demonstrations of power are not in the best interest of the teaching staff or the children. She believes in the empowerment of teachers and is willing to put her own position in jeopardy to stand up for honesty and truth. Also included in a theme of authenticity is the notion of caring. Noddings (1984) believes that when people are truly caring, the reality of others can be integrated into their experiences. This possibility for development reinforces the idea of teacher support groups and team teaching as mutually supportive for professional educators. Needleman's (1986) concept of authenticity includes that quality which

inspires a sense of wonder and a love of being. Being authentic in this sense means that the individual is always searching for an improved vision and tries to match what is done with what one knows is right or just.

Williams (1993) suggests that educators should demonstrate moral principles in order to teach effectively. For example, respect may best be created in a positive moral climate by modeling respect for others and providing quality teaching. Hyland (1986) argues that facilitating the learning of moral principles must be based on more than value-neutral approaches. Morality is not an issue only when problems or contradictions arise in an educational setting, but responsibility for individual and social welfare continuously occurs. Moral principles and standards determine the extent to which human action or conduct in teachers is right or wrong (Goodlad, 1990, Kirkhorn, 1981, Wilcox, 1992). An ethical environment is achieved when moral reasoning consistently asserts the importance of human dignity, nourishes growth and achievement, and insists on respect in interpersonal relations and communications.

Greenfield (1986), McCollough (1992), Pagano (1991), and Samuels (1990) argue that the development of moral imagination should be included in teacher education. Moral imagination is defined as that which generates tolerance, forgiveness, and a capacity to develop a vision regarding what is possible and desirable in a given educational setting. The capacity to empathize with others and to identify creative possibilities for ethical action is promoted, and this differs from original morality which is basically a fundamental and ineluctable morality. Childers (1989) suggests that moral education is concerned with learning about good conduct in a practical manner, and the development of character is about those stable personal qualities that are revealed in an individual's actions. As preservice teachers are assisted to understand the responsibility for their own moral thoughts, feelings, and actions in their future teaching situations, they, also, may be helped to understand how character

can be developed in their pupils through a process of moral reasoning leading to appropriate behavior.

Social Justice

Included in moral education are social justice issues such as concern for others, social awareness, and development of conscience. Connell (1993) outlines three key reasons why social justice matters to everyone in education. First, the educational system is a major public asset. Second, education is likely to become even more important in the future. Third, teaching and learning as social practices always involve moral values and issues of justice. In teacher education, Craig (1993) contends that the development and use of moral imagination helps preservice teachers become sensitive to social justice issues such as distributive justice and equality of educational opportunity. Multicultural education is a manifestation of equity and social justice issues and is responsive to cultural differences, with the aim of promoting individual student achievement, mutual respect, and tolerance among students. According to Fullinwider (1993), the underlying aim of diversity in education should be to help students develop a more or less realistic view of the world and help them to think for themselves. To succeed in this effort of justice, a true diversity of voices must be heard. To become sensitive and empathic to multicultural, multiethnic, and other issues of equity, students first need to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes and be encouraged to understand their own cultural identity. As a student's ability to think, feel, and investigate is enhanced, an awareness of how others experience diversity will be developed (King, Chipman, & Cruz-Janzen, 1994). It is important for students to examine their own beliefs, values, and responses to cultures other than their own. An emphasis on the similarity of basic values in diverse situations rather than the differences is the essence of helping individuals develop a sensitivity to their

experiences of diversity. The goals of social justice focus on developing and preserving an anti-bias, anti-racist, and multicultural society.

To begin to comprehend education for children that focuses on sensitivity for others, students must first be accorded professional autonomy, respect, and control over decisions about priorities in their own personal and professional development. As developing professionals, they can be assisted to enhance their ability to interpret and understand the meaning of children's lived cultural experiences, traditions, ethical values, and interpersonal relationships. Addressing moral and cultural issues together affords an opportunity for enhancing an open perspective for development and learning.

Collaboration As A Moral Act

Collaboration is a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own vision of possibilities (Gray, 1989). Collaboration implies interdependence, joint ownership of decisions, and exchange without domination. Insights can be gained by working with others whose perspectives are different from our own, especially when we are solving problems, constructing knowledge, and enhancing interpersonal interactions. The methods applied in collaboration make use of the significance of social relationships where there is shared meaning, common ground, and mutual understanding. In collaborative learning, it is assumed that as individuals work together they are responsible for constructing their own knowledge and negotiating meanings from their own experiences.

Sometimes disruptive stresses arise in collaborative networks which block collaborative learning and create psychological risks, diversity, and dissonance. Bruffee (1995) points out that sometimes collaboration groups cannot come to terms because they do not speak the same technical or professional language, there is no

mediator to bridge this communication or interpersonal gap, and misunderstandings and miscommunication may create an inability to move the goals of the group forward in a productive manner. A second cause of dissent in collaboration groups may be a lack of negotiation skills. Some individuals have only experienced punishment, disrespect, submission, or domination in group experiences, and with this background they may feel uncomfortable in collaborative learning situations. For example, if they do not know how to collaborate, they may resist efforts to make decisions, choices, or compromise because of their perception of an hierarchical order of authority. Collaboration can be for perceived survival, like the collaborators in the Second World War who did not question Nazi supremacy. In this case the occupying position was aided and abetted by those who did or did not believe in the professed ideology. In educational settings, it may appear that a group is involved in collaborative learning, but if there are attitudes supporting patterns of dominance and passivity, or if there are vested interests, then collaborative learning for the benefit of all stakeholders can be sabotaged. A third disruptive stress may arise from intimacy issues where there are pressures to maintain the coherence of cliques or groups. A feeling of loyalty to friends or gangs can inhibit participation in other relationships such as collaborative class consensus. Social engagements can be hard work, and group members may agree in the initial stages that they will be tactful, listen responsively, compromise, and negotiate, but implementing these strategies when there is power to be conceded may restrict the process.

Knowing the advantages and limitations of collaboration, I, like many supporters of the concept, believe that collaboration is a moral act and should be used whenever possible. Moral responsibility and moral imagination are important dimensions in the development of collaborative learning environments, and opportunities for devising ethical and moral environments capitalize on the value of collaborative learning while seeking to avoid alienation and fragmentation. Tom

(1984) and Goodlad (1990) argue that all collaboration in education is moral as it deals with the social relationships among stakeholders and involves interdependent processes of deciding program priorities. Wildavsky (1986) explains that responsiveness is the key to collaboration. The idea is not that two people should work as one, as this is of little advantage, but rather, together they may work to improve a situation. Togetherness requires awareness of, and responsiveness to, the differences and similarities that have led them into a venture in collaboration. Collaborative group members can learn to agree to disagree, but a process of collaboration protects each party's interests by guaranteeing they are heard and understood. Justice demands that we recognize the inexhaustibility of differences and that we organize the conditions in which we live and work accordingly. With participatory and democratic practices of collaborative learning, opportunities exist for understanding distortions of communications and plays of power in normal discourse.

At present, collaborative learning in preservice education constitutes an alternative to the present asymmetrical relations of power and distribution of knowledge and can lay a foundation for individuals to work together to resolve some of the contradictions students face (Trimbur 1989). Existing dichotomies to be addressed include the monopoly of expertise with the impetus to know, the separation of work and play, allegiance to peers versus the dependence on faculty recognition, and the experience of cooperation with the requirement of competition. Mediating practical collaborative situations occurs when the teacher educator understands that his or her primary role is to assist learners to support one another and to facilitate conversations. Through collaboration the preservice teacher can experience participatory and democratic practices (Trimbur 1989), and within attainable collaborative contexts preservice teachers can grow in their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the teaching community. Thus, a knowledge of their professional teaching identity and the processes of learning collaboratively will be

useful skills for preservice teachers to use when designing and implementing learning environments

Concluding Statements

Preservice teachers can come to understand that within their teacher education experiences some landscapes are supportive, and negative perceptions of other contexts are not insurmountable. Meanings can be negotiated and experiences reconstructed as education students grow and develop an understanding of the effect of divergent landscapes which range from perceived constraints of cultural myths to supportive moral climates. Also, collaborative opportunities may be mediated to assist preservice teachers to become reflective, creative, and empowered future teachers.

The following chapter explores the methodology used in this investigation. A personal research journey is outlined for studying the perceptions, beliefs, and values that three early childhood preservice teachers bring to their teacher education, as well as seeking to understand the landscapes which influence their development and learning.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

The primary focus, question, or concern of a study influences the selection of methodology and activities which are employed in the pursuit of knowledge (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). In a philosophical climate of positivism, the traditional research method of choice has been quantitative. In such a research approach, hypotheses are formulated, empirically based comparisons and information are predicted, and judgments are made. Methodologies which are dominated by an emphasis on validity, reliability, generalizability, and theoretical relevance make use of various experimental designs, sampling procedures, measuring instruments, and statistical treatments of data. The results of such investigations are measured by objective, technical, and rational problem solving aspects.

The hegemony of a world view that seeks only "a priori" knowledge dominated by a tradition of disciplined-based perspectives that are independent of personal and practical concerns, aims, and values is questioned by a way of thinking which sees the world in terms of many other explanations of phenomena (Levin & Clowes, 1991, Smith, 1992). The movement away from a modernist view with its emphasis on scientific rationality, suggests ways of thinking which defy boundaries, champion pluralities, and solve problems in diverse ways. Methodologies which consider multiple perspectives and emphasize ethics of care and emotion deliberately seek to make sense of personal concerns and situations. Here education is influenced, not only in various intellectual realms, but in humanistic, ethical, and social areas, and researchers are

encouraged to locate themselves in reflexive texts in terms of meaningful relationships, contexts, and phenomena (Marshall, 1992; Peshkin, 1993)

There continues to be a growing interest in using qualitative research perspectives which address social concerns, emphasize moral issues, and listen to the voices of others. Multicultural education, women's studies, interdisciplinary work, and development of dynamic teaching roles involve problems, concerns, and issues that cannot be sufficiently measured in quantitative ways (Walker, 1991). Opportunities may be given in qualitative research approaches, not for judgment or generalizability as research aims, but for promoting understanding, meaning, interpretation, transferability, and personal validity. Thus, questions, concerns, and issues of a personal and ethical nature can be well served when the praxis of teacher preparation is informed and interpreted by a qualitative research perspective such as the biographic method.

Biographical Conversations as Research

One qualitative inquiry perspective that interprets information from life histories, current realities, and perceptions for the purpose of understanding how an individual thinks, feels, and acts is the biographic method (Bullough, 1993; Butt, 1991; Grumet, 1980; Smith, 1993). A study of an autobiography or biography of a learner's past and current lived experiences may be a deliberate and critical process that aims at making educational sense through interpretations of expressed thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences, as well as examining and/or interpreting the relationships between earlier and later events in the lived experiences of individuals. Biography begins with a collection of personal life accounts which, primarily, describe significant events and epiphanies or turning points in one's life story. The focus then moves to interpretations of an individual's responses to situations and how that individual initiates various events. When documented in the first person, the text is called an

autobiography, and when observed and recorded by another person, it is termed a biography

Interpreted past experiences are important aspects for insights into teacher preparation opportunities. Autobiographies or biographies of preservice teachers are comprised, in part, of selected and interpreted cumulative experiences and information about their previous worlds as students in school. Past and current experiences can be elicited in conversations to construct a perceived life history. Selected accounts may be preserved on tape recordings and/or recorded in field notes, and interpretations of collected information have the potential to enrich understandings and extend insights into the issues and problems of individuals being studied (Butt, 1988). A biographical study of an individual seeks to understand how this individual is influenced by his/her cultural conventions, social contexts, and perceived landscapes (Bruner, 1985, Bullough & Gitlin, 1995, Butt & Raymond, 1987, Clandinin & Connelly, 1996).

The importance of preservice teachers' biographies has been acknowledged by teacher educators and researchers (Butt, 1990, Grumet, 1987, Osborn, 1990, Smith, 1993). A biographical or autobiographical process is not just the recalling of past experiences or current realities, but signifies that a construction of personal reality is interpreted from shared experiences. Thus, biographical accounts go beyond a description of past and present events in one's life, to a deeper examination of patterns and principles. All experiences, in every aspect of a participant's life, are candidates for inclusion in personal biography. For example, interpretations of educational-related life histories of preservice teachers are a useful means of identifying the perceptions, beliefs, and values about teaching which are basic to developing the roles of classroom practitioners and dealing with the contextual realities of educational situations. No two preservice teachers make meaning of their experiences in precisely the same way. Each individual brings varying experiences to their education and reconstructs these experiences in unique ways. Commonalties and significant variables in experiences, as

related in shared biographical accounts, may be used to understand the process of teaching and learning from the perspective of the preservice teacher, and knowing may come from biographical information where the narrator and the listener are participating in common experiences (Denzin, 1989).

Guided Biography

Biographical methodology may be most useful when the inquiry is guided. For example, Birren (1987) and Butt (1991) maintain that family history is a significant area to explore as early childhood memories and recollections of family events bring forth rich interpretations and inferences. These early experiences can constitute a framework for identifying an individual's significant perceptions, ideas, and beliefs. Also, emulation of significant others can be one of the basic sources of information in biographic methodology. We often model the behavior of individuals whom we deem as important, and we learn not only those aspects that we consciously select and attend to, but we also learn other factors that are outside our awareness. For example, in field-based practicums up to 75 percent of learning is from modeling the non-verbal behavior of the participating classroom practitioner (Costa & Gamiston, 1992).

Other areas of interest for preservice teachers to include in their biographical accounts may include such things as early childhood care and school experiences, previous work experiences with children, other employment experiences, and organizational involvement. Merely mentioning such themes can set off rich associations to be recounted by preservice teachers, and such reconstructions can be extended and enhanced through the use of active listening skills (Thomas, 1979).

Butt (1991) explains that development and learning may be transformed as individuals interpret past and current experiences, circumstances, and events from their own life histories. He discusses how the role of gestalts, "ahas", paradoxes, and ways of resolving dilemmas may influence thoughts and actions. Themes, patterns, trends,

and phases may be identified, linked, and explained as biographic accounts reveal perceptions, thoughts, and ideas. Denzin (1989) maintains that a biography will not contain just an accumulation of chronological events of an individual's life history. Instead, information is interpreted and constructed from an individual's perceptions and beliefs.

Sharing autobiographies with others, such as those shared by a teacher educator and his/her students, can lead to the development of close interpersonal relationships. When the teacher educator changes roles and becomes a researcher, the entry into the students' field settings is already bridged. Sitter (1984) documents how a researcher, while functioning as a university supervisor, forms close bonds with his or her students, easily enters into their field settings, and becomes more sensitive to their contextual realities. As participants begin to trust the researcher as an educational insider, they may become very candid in recounting past and current lived experiences. Diverging from the traditional researcher role of detached objectivity, the relationships of an engaged researcher and participant will facilitate open discussion of authentic perceptions resulting in rich descriptions of perceptions, beliefs, and values. Providing a supportive environment may foster ways of collaborating that consciously encourage preservice teachers to feel comfortable in questioning bureaucratic hierarchical procedures and exclusion realities in their roles as students, as well as, encouraging a creative synergy of ideas for empowerment (Dickens, 1993).

Experience, as embodied in one's personal biography, constitutes both the content and consequence of reflective thinking, and the researcher (educator) with whom these preservice teachers share their personal and student histories may assist students to feel empowered and capable of critical reflections. Reflection may take the form of self-reflection, reflections on constructs of reality, and reflections about practical activity in future teaching endeavors (Zeichner, 1990, Dana, 1992). Preparing students for teaching may include sustained discussions in which teacher educators and

preservice teachers engage in biographical conversations and through reflective practices discover possibilities and opportunities for development and learning. Some would argue (Kagan, 1992) that students require professional practical field experiences in connection with their course work before they are capable of critical reflection, leading to assumptions by some school practitioners and educational personnel that socialization of teacher candidates is the school's ultimate responsibility. However, Clark (1988) points out that many preservice teachers have had numerous interpersonal experiences with children from which understandings, perceptions, and beliefs about teaching have been constructed. Preservice teachers come to their teaching program with implicit perceptions and beliefs, and through interpreting biographical information, these preservice teaching candidates are assisted in explicitly developing and understanding their perceptions, beliefs, and values and the relationships these characteristics have to practical experiences.

Biography in Teacher Preparation

In teacher preparation, a biographical approach provides a dynamic framework for understanding preservice teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions. Through discussion, the meanings, motives, beliefs, and intentions of preservice teachers may be pursued and interpreted collaboratively by researcher and student. A biographical conversational process permits access on the part of a researcher to a participant's thoughts and to his/her unexamined or habitual aspects of interacting with children or deciding how to present subject matter. The function of listening begins and enhances conversation and may be used by the researcher to begin a process of understanding the preservice teacher's perspective. Exploring unique and individual manifestations of personal practical ways of knowing and studying differing personalized learning contexts are important aspects of qualitative research. Satre (1967) maintains that if a person thinks and believes something exists, its effects are real. If preservice teachers

believe that they must teach in a particular manner, they usually design and implement educational programs which reflect the premise of such beliefs. In teacher preparation, interpreting biographical information makes it possible for teacher educators and/or education students to search for explicit understandings of past experiences from which to construct meanings and understand future learning possibilities.

Interpretive Inquiry for Informing Biographical Information

The study of dynamic human interactions and complex perspectives such as those found in the text of biographies are especially suited to interpretation which is primarily a practical and moral activity (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Burge, 1990; Butt, 1988; Fredrich, 1986). Ways of knowing begin in our perceived social and material environments and are interpreted and extended through relevant and constructed experiences (Dewey, 1963; Katz, 1995; Merleau-Ponty,1964; Rorty 1989; Smith, 1992; and van Manen, 1989). Interpretivists such as Rorty (1989) and Smith (1992) maintain that reality may never be known independent of the interests, purposes, and values of the knowers and the real world is something we make, not something we discover or find. According to Gadamer (1982), the pursuit of knowledge goes beyond what can be accomplished by empirical research. When the idea is forwarded that reality is not just out there in the world, but is the product of human activity, we may then use interpretation to inform the biographic method as a way of understanding social and cultural concerns (Eisner, 1991).

Interpretative inquiry as a concept encourages understanding and creates insights into phenomena (Heidegger, 1962). Self-disclosure, suggestions, and conversations in uncovering and reconstructing options and possibilities for greater understanding of the concerns being investigated are integral parts of the interpretive process. An interpretive account may be unique, credible, or plausible if there is integrity in searching for uncoverings and understandings of practical concerns. Our

experiences are constructed and reconstructed as we interact with others, and things we have experienced can be applied in our interpretations. Alternate interpretations are experienced in our actions and relationships with others, and new perspectives may be constructed as we seek to broaden and deepen our understanding of ourselves and others through practical and moral activity (Smith, 1992).

Depictions of a situation depend upon different interests, purposes, and values of those who are making the interpretations, and concerns are centered on the understandings we have in relation to others in our society (Rorty, 1989; Smith, 1992). Ellis points out that "there is no uniquely correct interpretation possible since perception is interpretation and each person perceives from a different vantage point, situatedness, and history" (1996, p.3). Experiences in an interpretive inquiry may be purposefully deconstructed and alternative explanations proposed, concerns of the whole may be understood in terms of the parts or vice versa, and meanings may be brought to every day reality in ways that realize new understandings from reconstructed life experiences. When using interpretive inquiry, one is to make the strongest case possible for the interpretations of a particular situation, and insights are to be supported by reasons, relevant examples, and informed judgments. Gadamer (1982) maintains that the methods used to investigate a concern depend on the researcher's experiences and creativity. Prejudgments and prejudices of a researcher have a role in interpretation, and a researcher's personal and professional knowledge is important in the interpretive process.

Heidegger (1962) and Packer and Addison (1989) discuss interpretive inquiry in terms of a hermeneutic circle of knowing where a concern or question is initially posed, and in beginning the interpretation a forestructure of projections and pre-understandings of the researcher are entered into the forward arc of the circle. Such pre-understandings embody a particular and real concern, and the kind of caring displayed is primarily of a practical nature. As a concern is entered into the loop of the

circle the researcher displays an openness and motivation to uncover unexpected findings and to go beyond expected perspectives. In the return arc of the hermeneutic circle, the understanding of an entity does not necessarily come from a correspondence between theory and practice; rather uncoverings or surprises are allowed to show themselves. As Ellis states, "the uncovering of an entity is the return arc of the hermeneutic circle used in the interpretive inquiry and it is the response to our inquiry. Thus, if there are no surprises, we either do not yet see what can be uncovered, or we have not yet approached the entity in a way that respects the way it can show itself" (1996, p 8). Any interpretations are open to discussion and reinterpretation, and open-ended questions may proceed indefinitely in loops of a spiraling circle until a conscious decision is made to stop the process.

One important aspect in the interpretive process is to attend to language in expanding human understanding (Gadamer, 1982). Rorty (1989) encourages a definition of concepts and terms during an inquiry process to enhance understanding of language for descriptive purposes and communications. Smith (1991) suggests that as language is developed and defined from interpreting and reconstructing past and current lived experiences, new insights will be encountered, and new understandings will become apparent. Through conversations, principles of interpretive inquiry may outline research as a time of observing, listening, questioning, reflecting, analyzing, and continually seeking more adequate interpretations of human interactions and/or situations such as those found in biographical accounts.

My Research Journey

The focus of this study is on preservice teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and values and their relationships to education and practical activity. My research journey concerning this study first began as I developed and interpreted my own autobiographical work in an introductory graduate course of collaborative

autobiography as research. The biographic method encouraged the articulation and reconstruction of my beliefs and perceptions about the developing role of an early childhood teacher, and concerns, issues, and questions were uncovered from this biographic method for future contemplation.

After an initial Bachelor of Education degree with an Early Childhood focus, I spent ten years developing my role as a teacher of young children in Canada and Australia. Returning to Alberta, I completed a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education and for the next two years worked as a research associate for a provincial government task force which was charged to investigate the competence of early childhood teachers. During the next three years I was a coordinator of early childhood education in a large county system and was responsible for the professional development of early childhood teachers and the organization of early childhood programs. Subsequently I moved to the United States and entered a Ph. D. program in early childhood education, but after one year withdrew from the program as a family member was transferred across the country. For the next decade, I taught in community college early childhood preservice and inservice programs, and developed, administered, and participated in the team teaching of a multi-aged, learner-centered program for young children. I again returned to Canada and spent one year teaching in a community college early childhood program. It was with the preservice teachers in this program that I experienced an epiphany concerning the development of preservice teachers, and the autobiographical research course set the stage for bringing my beliefs, perceptions, and experiences to my research journey. For the last four years, I have been constructing and reconstructing my own early childhood and teacher educator experiences through graduate qualitative research courses, teacher education seminars, early childhood courses, and other teacher educator experiences. For example, I was allowed to be an integral part of an alternative collaborative reflective practicum as one of the university facilitators, and I became involved in the ongoing

research about this practicum. Also, during the composition of my dissertation I have been teaching in a university school of education. The results of my study of teacher preparation have not only been the learning of or assessing new procedures or alternative ways of teacher education, rather, it is the result of layers of understanding that have been surfacing from engaging in biographical conversations, practical activities, reconstructed experiences, and long-term reflections with preservice teachers. My own experiences have set the stage for my understanding the arcs of the hermeneutic circle.

Access to Participants

As part of a graduate teaching assistantship, I had an opportunity to be a university facilitator for early childhood practicum students in their last year of a teacher certification program. In this specific assignment with four student teachers, I observed their interactions in the classroom, read their reflection journals, participated in school-based facilitator and student-teacher conversations, and conferenced with students. At the completion of this practicum, I read student teaching evaluations written by school-based facilitators, self-evaluations of student teachers, and summarized an evaluation survey of all the stakeholders involved in the practicum. As a university facilitator in this collaborative and reflective term practicum, I was a liaison between university and school, and in this supportive role I was able to develop a close interpersonal relationship with my four assigned student teachers. Due to my dual role as university facilitator and researcher, I had the opportunity to support the preservice teachers' goals and objectives, listen to their thoughts and feelings, and build relationships with them that would not have been possible only in the role of a researcher. The students and I lived the intense experiences of the practicum. From previous experiences, I had become most interested in the voice of preservice teachers

and I was delighted to be given the opportunity to work as a university facilitator at the same time having an opportunity to gather research data.

My original intention was to use this semester to obtain biographical information through personal conversations with the four early childhood student teachers, as well as facilitating their practicum experiences. However, as I began to spend more time with each of the students, I discovered their time and emotional investment in the practicum was far too intense to request further hours for biographical conversations. However, as a graduate student in early childhood education with many of the same concerns, issues, and instructors as the students, I came to be perceived as an insider and they intimately shared their past and current beliefs, thoughts, and feelings with me.

Collection of Biographical Information

Immediately following the student teacher practicum, one participant left the area and had to be excluded from the study, but during the next two months, I met weekly with each of the other three participants to elicit and listen to their biographical accounts which they felt were important in their past and current lived experiences. I listened as they discussed their perceived realities, explored contextual influences, and acknowledged important epiphanies. The biographical conversations, which began with a concern about the influence of the perceptions, beliefs, and values on their teacher education, were guided by a broad framework of the following categories:

1. early and ongoing family experiences
2. early childhood school experiences
3. most important later school experiences
4. significant others
5. moral responsibility
6. social justice issues

7. previous experiences and work with young children

The biographical information was elicited through active listening principles and grounded in the participants' lived experiences. These conversations yielded over 25 hours of taped biographical information which was later transcribed. In addition to the transcribed text of biographical conversations, I also had access to the three participants' reflection journals from the term practicum along with my field notes of observations and personal reflections. In total I had over 300 pages of typed and hand written text as I continued my personal journey of identifying and understanding the influence of the participants perceptions, beliefs, and values on their teacher education

Analysis Of Collected Information

Packer and Addison (1989) propose a framework where interpretive inquiry principles are used in Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutic circle to develop understanding by involvement and participation in practical activity. These interpretive principles are one means of analyzing collected biographical information. Interpretations are followed by discussions of researcher and participant to increasingly integrate and enhance networks and connections. Heidegger believed that an individual must have a practical sense of the context within which a concern is situated in order to begin developing insights. He termed this the forestructure of the forward arc of the hermeneutic circle. In the initial forward arc of the hermeneutic circle in this study, my major concern was to listen to the biographical conversations of three early childhood preservice teachers and identify some of the perceptions, beliefs, and values that these preservice teachers felt were important for teacher education. From the research literature and my extensive experiences in early childhood education as previously discussed in this chapter (over two decades teaching in programs for young children in community college early childhood teacher education programs), I had brought some very definite conceptualizations about early childhood education and about preparing

effective early childhood teachers. For example, I wanted teachers to know and be able to use principles of child development to design, implement, and assess learner-centered programs for young children. Recently, my predispositions about how early childhood teachers best develop their practical effectiveness had been challenged by my own biographical accounts of my development as an educator, and I was afforded opportunities through work situations for exploring students' voices and their ways of knowing. As discussed, my role as a university facilitator/researcher in an early childhood cohort student-teacher practicum gave me access to preservice teachers, allowed me to become a trusted listener, and provided opportunities to participate in rich and informative biographical conversations.

The more I was involved with preservice teachers, the more I realized they wanted to be heard. For example, when education students became aware that doctoral research which involved listening to their experiences was in process, I received calls from students who were not even involved in the early childhood cohort program, but who wanted to be considered for the study. I had conversations with two of these individuals, and although the information shared will not be included in the study, it suggests that the individual and collective voice of student teachers is a willing and largely untapped resource. Of course not every individual voice can be given or should be given collective time (Graham, 1994), but if we practice moral responsibility, then each voice needs to be acknowledged and offered opportunities for scaffolding and facilitating it's own experiences.

Using Packer and Addison's (1989) suggestions regarding interpretive principles in the return arc of the hermeneutic circle, biographical information of the three participants was collected, analyzed and interpreted. The text was analyzed by using categories and themes (Butt, 1991; Strauss, 1987) which these preservice teachers saw as important influences in developing appropriate characteristics. Some examples of the language about learning used by the participants and text from their

biographical narratives were also used in an analysis of the text (Smith, 1991, Mischler, 1986; Riessman, 1993; Rosaldo, 1993). Over the next few months, I repeatedly studied the collected information which included the language the preservice teachers used to describe and explain their perceptions and experiences, and their biographical accounts of constructing and reconstructing experiences. Interpretations and reinterpretations of the biographical conversations were written, and the circle became a growing spiral as more questions surfaced. Unfortunately, I moved from one end of the continent to the other before completing the analysis of the data, and I was not in a position to revisit the participants for their final input into my interpretations. Before beginning the writing process, I had one of the participants transcribe our conversations which supplied a way for her to verify exactly what she had said and/or wanted to say, and I gave a second participant the same opportunity, but she declined. Also, I had access to observational field-notes as examples of their practical activities and copies of their student-teacher reflection journals before recording the biographical conversations. This collected information provided an opportunity for me in the role of the researcher to go back and search the observation records to see if they were practicing what they were advocating. Also, I was part of the shared conversations, and the articulated perceptions, beliefs, and values of the preservice teachers, as integral parts of a learner-centered perspective of teacher education, revealed a growing bank of questions.

The written text in this document contains only pseudonyms, and the ethics review made it very clear to the participants they could opt out of the project at any time. Except for repeats, pauses, and incomprehensible phrases, I attempted to use the participants' language as much as possible. This task was made quite feasible as all three participants were very articulate, positive, and excited about completing their teacher education program.

Concluding Statements

Biographical conversations were chosen as the major source of information for this study. All conversations were grounded in the perspectives and experiences of individual participants, and interpretations of the biographical conversations were intended to provide one means of understanding the personal and constructivist processes of the three preservice teachers in their teacher preparation program. From interpreting information collected through biographical conversations, I hoped to understand what perceptions, beliefs, and values were considered important by each preservice student, and how these personal qualities influenced the construction of experiences in their teacher preparation programs. The next chapter, Chapter 5, is a written summary and interpretation of the biographical text of individual participants and the categorical and conversational frameworks which each selected as the most important aspects of their biography. As I also used the text from the preservice teachers' practicum reflection journals and my field notes of classroom observations, reflections, and conferences, I was able to weave a tapestry of the influences of the perceptions, beliefs, and values with their learning and practice. The connections of reflections and observations with the biographical conversations are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

Chapter 5

Biographical Conversations
With
Three Preservice Teachers

Introduction

At the core of this research are three unique early childhood preservice teachers. Their biographical accounts range from vivid memories of early experiences to self-selected current realities in their teacher preparation programs. I intended that an interpretation of each participant's biographical conversations would capture the essence and effect of the perceptions, beliefs, and values brought to their teacher education. Active listening principles as proposed by Gordon (1979), and used by those such as Jones (1986), are used to ground biographical accounts in each participant's experiences. Relevant questions are posed, experiences described and interpreted, and insights and meanings revealed as each conversation takes on a spirit of its own. These biographical conversations are centered in early family experiences, school experiences, influence of friends and significant others, past work opportunities with young children, and current realities. Essential elements of these conversations are recognized in key words, phrases, epiphanies, and gestalts. Expectations, insights, uncoverings, and surprises from these accounts may assist readers to understand their own situations.

As noted in the above paragraph, these three research participants are unique individuals, and interpretations of each biographical conversation reveals rich information to be used in nurturing their personal development and learning. Owing to a commitment to sponsor each individual's voice and learn from each education

student, many of the excerpts and suggestions from the biographical conversations which follow in this chapter are interpreted and applied within a constructivist perspective. If we believe that knowledge is constructed and the knower is an intimate part of the known, then we may recognize from biographical accounts that each student weaves his or her passions through instruction and reflection into a recognizable whole. With conversations which include such aspects as listening, discourse, explorations, questions, debate, and sharing, each student's perceptions, values, beliefs, and personal qualities become connected knowing.

Conversations With Lisa

Beginning The Dialogue

Lisa entered college right out of high school and at present is a fourth year elementary education student with a focus area in early childhood. She is married and has, in her words, "no children yet". Psychologically and physically she is very close to her immediate family and explains that her mom and dad are really spoiled, as far as she is concerned, as they see all their daughters twice a week. Her mother and father live on the family dairy farm which was Lisa's home until she left for college. The family consists of Lisa, her parents, and three other sisters. Two of the sisters are older than Lisa and one is younger. Her mother taught school for several years before becoming a farm wife and mother of four girls, but she remains active in the teaching profession as a substitute teacher. Lisa's mother has always stressed that her daughters need an education to provide for their families in case something unfortunate happens to their husbands. Lisa was the first in her family to be married and the security of her marriage appeared to give her more perceived personal and professional choices. Several times in our conversations she mentioned that although she was seeking a full

time teaching position she could afford to work part time. She contrasted her situation to her oldest unmarried sister who needs a full time position to support herself. Lisa feels kindergarten has a dubious future in her sister's school since the Alberta Government cut funding to early childhood service programs. Her sister's need for security was a good reason for requesting a transfer to the primary grades. Although Lisa would accept an early childhood services position, she will not limit her search to the kindergarten classroom.

Influence of Early School Experiences

Since Lisa's mother is a teacher, I wondered how she influenced Lisa's decision to enter teacher education and what role she played in Lisa's early school experiences. The literature reports that many individuals who go into the teaching profession have successful school experiences of their own and/or have mentors who provide leadership and support in the field (Lortie 1975). Not only does Lisa have the connection with her mother as an elementary teacher, but her oldest sister is a kindergarten teacher. In regards to Lisa's early experiences being relevant to later aspirations for teaching, she has no problem recalling memorable early school experiences.

> School is another story! Probably, because my mom was a teacher, we were expected to do well in school. However my beginning school experiences were dreadful. I didn't go to kindergarten and I only went to one week of preschool which was the worst experience of my life. I am not sure why I had to go that week, maybe it was harvest and my dad couldn't take both my sister and I in the tractor cab all day and maybe my mom was subbing. Anyway, I remember that we had to nap on this mat in a big dark room and we would be allowed to get up one at a time to do the next activity or craft. I didn't like the idea of having to lay on a mat with all those other people with the lights out. Mostly I think it was stressful because I spent most of the time wondering if my mom would actually pick me up and I thought I had been dropped off and left with all these strangers. I can recall the whole week thinking this should not be happening! Also I remember the first day of grade

> one because we were late and everyone was sitting in their desks. My Mom and I walked in and there was only one desk left in front of the whole class. I felt awful! Also, at lunch time in grade one, I remember watching a lot of the Flintstones and the only other thing I remember in grade one was failing math. Because I failed math, I was put in the slower grade two class. Here the teacher had all these award type things and if we read a certain number of books or were the first one finished with assignments we could earn real ice-cream cones. I ate a lot of ice-cream cones the first couple of months in grade two. But by October, the teacher figured out I wasn't the stupid kid for which they had me pegged. I was always the first one done with assigned work and would be sitting there waiting for everybody else to be finished. She did not know what to do with me anymore so a note was sent home and I was moved to the grade two class of brighter kids. In grade two I didn't have a desk for quite a while and I had to sit at a table at the back because there wasn't any room for me. But I had learned that there are rewards for being the first one to finish work. In the class to which I was bumped, everything became a race, especially between another girl and myself. I just had to beat her, and I was always checking. Is she done? No, okay, get done: quick, quick, quick. I learned to play the game very early.

There are a few things about school in general that Lisa learned very early. First, the pangs of initial separation anxiety are remembered in such an alarming manner that they may be classified as among her most memorable early school experiences. Second, Lisa's early memories center around her failure in grade one math with the teacher misreading her abilities and promoting an atmosphere of competition. When her advanced learning capabilities were discovered part way through second grade, she was transferred to another classroom where she felt isolated and didn't even have a desk to call her own. Neither of these experiences may be particularly atypical in an elementary classroom, but they were powerful influences for Lisa, as she selectively recalls and passionately relates these specific incidents. She appears to transfer her own early experiences to the experiences of children in the daycare where she worked in previous summers, as well as to the experiences of children in her student teaching practicum, and she spends considerable energy analyzing the effect on children who experience few decision making opportunities.

> Coming from working in a daycare center, I really have a problem with some daycare situations. I really sympathize with the children who must be there. The daycare in which I worked for two summers is in the basement of a church and when it rained you were stuck down in this hole with no windows. The children didn't see outside from when they were dropped off until they were picked up and sometimes that was eleven or twelve hours long. All the kids were separated by age and put into their own little compartments, and there was little for them to do. It isn't natural to be separated from older and younger kids all day. How can they have an opportunity to learn to relate and connect with different ages when they never have the opportunity? Also, this daycare didn't even have centers for learning activities. I did suggest and organize some centers, but when the staff tried this approach they put the children in groups and rotated the groups. This didn't solve the problems at all and the whole experience was so frustrating!

It concerned Lisa that the grade one children in her student teaching class had so little choice in their daily activities. She described several times how their day was very structured and that only academic achievement seemed to be important to the classroom teacher. For example, the children were continually pressured to comply with directions. Math and language arts curriculum comprised the entire day and rewards were given to those who met arbitrary standards. To Lisa, the class atmosphere lacked warmth and the children were continually expected to achieve arbitrary standards. She attempted to balance the feelings she had for the children's stressful situation with her own role as a student teacher, and for the most part she felt powerless to remedy the situation. "I was made to feel that I wasn't yet a professional and didn't have the authority to question what was in the best interests of the children," she said. Also the teacher evaluated every single lesson plan that Lisa implemented and, like the children, Lisa felt it was in her best interests to comply with directions. Her impressions were summarized in that she felt her student teaching was more like a testing situation than a learning opportunity.

As related in her biographical conversations, two groups of early experiences seem to have been among the major influences on Lisa's perceptions and beliefs towards teaching. Her parents, especially her mother, had a tremendous influence on her development and learning and is still a very important influence in Lisa's life. The second major influence comes from her three sisters whom she still has almost daily contact.

> As children we would set up a play school and one of us would be the teacher and the rest would be students. Usually my oldest sister Linda would be the teacher because she had been the only child for four years, so in some ways she had the mentality that she was our mother. So a lot of times we were mothered by Linda instead of our mother. When I was too young for school, I remember waiting and being glad that Linda had to go to school so I could be the teacher. My whole life I have been organizing things so I could be the teacher, and it's almost here! Also, it has often seemed that I was having to rearrange my life due to my sisters' plans. We have a large extended family. My Dad has eight brothers and sisters and my mom has six brothers and sisters and we were very faithful in getting together with all of them, at least at Christmas if not during the year. Mostly they live in Southern Alberta, and we would go there for family reunions. Even now my Dad's family rents a camp for a week and we all get together over New Years. When our extended family was together, there was someone who was matched to our age all the way along. So my oldest sister would hang out with her age group, and the next oldest with her age group. The one cousin who was my age was allowed to play with my older sisters group, but I wasn't allowed to be part of the group. I was a pain of a little sister, so I started hanging out with the children who were just a bit younger. They were boys, but we did fun things like tobogganing, skating, and tag games.

Lisa's early experiences have given her the preconception of the importance of teaming with others. Collaboration principles, developed and learned from her intimate and active immediate family, were observable within her daily classroom work. For example, supportive networking experiences with other student teachers were ongoing, and she constructively explored how differences encountered with her school based facilitator could be turned into constructive solutions. Those such as Bruffee

(1995) and Gray (1989) maintain that differences can be constructively explored and solutions may be found in collaboration structures that go beyond what is possible to accomplish by oneself. Collaboration implies interdependence, and Lisa's experiences, such as described through her biographical conversations and reflection journals, contain many examples of networking with others to develop her personal and professional knowledge.

Articulated Values

Lisa is an undergraduate education student in her early twenties who came to college right out of high school and is ready to begin a teaching career after completing a four year university degree program. She had several previous opportunities that make her experiences interesting and unique. First, her initial two years of teacher education were at an interprovincial bible college. It was here she met her future husband, instructed young children at summer camp, and articulated many of her educational and personal values. She explains that her family always had gone to church and Sunday school and it was very important to her parents that the girls learn and practice the difference between right and wrong.

> Among my earliest memories are playing church. I would line all my kids (dolls) on the stairs and take them out of church when they misbehaved. This was to correct their behavior just as my parents did to me. Everyone tells me they had to deal with my stubborn streak and they were quick to point out that it was usually my fault when something happened that was inappropriate. For example, I remember my mom standing my sister and I face to face and waiting until we said, or at least I said, I was sorry. Yes, that is definitely an early memory! Another real important memory for me is going to church and Sunday school and then having friends over after church to play. Church activities were always a big part of our lives and having their girls behave was very important to my parents.

The development and practice of moral responsibility in the classroom was an ongoing concern for Lisa, and she continually related how moral decisions would be a part of her work with children. Decisions made about discipline and her experiences with moral aspects of behavior were important components as outlined in her conversations.

Current Realities

Being flexible, even from early childhood, is a quality Lisa extensively displayed in her teacher preparation program. For example, the required thematic unit to be designed and implemented for her major student teaching assignment was basically selected and directed by the classroom teacher. According to Lisa, this teacher was operating from an apprenticeship model during the practicum experience, and since the class curriculum schedule was set from the beginning of the school year to the end, Lisa was directed to teach a unit on fairy tales.

> She (the teacher) told me to find my own resources and plan the unit for which I would be responsible during my last weeks of practicum. I took my whole week of break to design a unit and gather resources and I was very pleased with the outcome. I came in with a completed web which she (the teacher) looked at and quickly I was made to realize that it just didn't quite fit in with her plans. She took my web, praised me for its completion, folded it, and put it in her binder. It was never touched again. Then she pulled out these materials that she had on nursery rhymes and fairy tales and directed me to do this and that. As I said, previously she told me she didn't have anything for me to use and now she showered me with stuff. I had to totally reorganize the whole unit. There were many things that I wanted to try, and my professors in Early Childhood Education had led us to believe that this would be a time for trying out some things we really believed in about the learning and development of young children. I had made up a big book, games and other things, but she would say things like, "no that rhyme doesn't really fit," or "I would rather you do it this way."

Lisa did deal with the directives very well and she was perceived as a team player by the classroom teacher as well as by others on the school campus. Her final school based evaluation contained comments such as "follows direction well," "is cooperative and respected by staff," and "is competent with the children." The classroom teacher frequently repeated how much the thought processes of the student teacher reflected her own. In my field observations, the classroom teacher never left Lisa to be completely responsible for the class, and Lisa related that she, at no time, was made to feel she could competently take over all classroom duties. I was continually amazed at Lisa's tolerance and patience in the situation. I perceived that Lisa was receiving little support from her teacher, and although I met with the cooperating teachers and addressed the need for allowing student teachers to explore with the children, this particular teacher's need to control was never resolved. The teacher perceived that she had much to offer the student teacher, but the student teacher only felt she was given directives and thought these suggestions were little use in helping her develop her teaching role. As her university facilitator, I was able to support the student teacher's efforts and opened up our lines of communication, but I was only there once a week. I became most interested with how she was coping and thriving in the situation and how she elicited support for her endeavors.

> She (the teacher) had me chart consonants and vowels in the nursery rhymes as class exercises and after they were charted I was to put them up around the room. I taped a chart onto the side of the filing cabinet but she didn't like the way I taped it so she ripped off all the tape and started retaping it right in front of me. I felt like leaving as I was made to feel I wasn't even able to tape up a chart properly. You see the problem was that I had ripped the masking tape instead of cutting it. I hadn't cut it straight to make it match up. Another thing that really bothered me was that all the other student teachers had their own table where they could work. Me, I had a box behind the desk. I was told to put my stuff there and I just had to go into and out of it all day just like one of the children. I can take directions but this was beyond playing the game for getting my degree. I immediately went to my friend Kellie who was student teaching next door and told her the story. She told

> me she couldn't have handled the situation and probably would have gone home. Kellie and Sharon have become great friends and we frequently talk about what happened during the day. I hope that is what my teaching situation is like. That there will be people who will be open and will share their ideas and give support. It's scary thinking you have the responsibility for the whole class by yourself.

While it was not surprising that student teachers may be discounted as less than full contributing professionals (Kagan, 1992), what was surprising was how articulate Lisa was, not complaining about her personal situation, but how she viewed this experience as not collaborative in providing good experiences for children. She discussed children's reactions in having so little choice in their daily programs and even less opportunity for first hand experiences. Kagan points out that traditional pre-service teachers may spend considerable time and energy in centering on themselves, but Lisa's professional development appeared to be well beyond such developmental limitations.

> The teacher had the class structured so everything the children were required to complete had to take between 5 and 15 minutes. For example, if the kids weren't done their printing in the short time allocated, she (the teacher) would just shut their books and take it from them anyway, and then they would have to do extra the next time. In this class there was no time for social studies, only language learning and math and I wasn't allowed to integrate the curriculum. She has her curricula to go through, like Mathworks, and no matter where the kids were in their concept development, she would say they were getting behind in the resource books and this work is for day six and they should be on day seven. The class structure seemed to be overwhelming for many of the children, and there was an unhappy atmosphere in the class.

Beliefs

Lisa's philosophical discussions of integration and learner-centered early childhood approaches, in her biographical conversations, were most revealing. For example, she had not expected all the non-education courses when she came to the

university and she perceived that most didn't have any bearing on how young children learn or on practical activity in the classroom. She confided how only one university professor actually got to know her as a person, and this was the only professor who made her feel what she (Lisa) said mattered. She discussed that if the university wants to prepare teachers who strive to understand children and know how to construct teacher knowledge, then they had better be prepared to do the same with their university students.

> Telling us how to do something isn't the same as showing us how or allowing us to experience what children will be experiencing. Other things that really bothered me was always having instructors think they knew what is best for me. I had few choices and if I was asked, it was seldom followed through. Also I really resent being required to buy an expensive textbook, authored by the professor, when it will be only marginally useful at best.

There are those who maintain that philosophy develops after extensive teaching experiences (Chen & Seng, 1992, Kagan, 1992, van Manen, 1989), yet those preservice teachers who bring rich lived experiences with children to their education have already begun to develop their philosophy about teaching. If education students have opportunities to have experiences and develop values about children's learning and development before and during their teacher preparation, through field-based and reflective opportunities, then open-ended and self-directed experiences can be empowering for preservice teachers (Rodriquez, 1993, Weinstein, 1990).

Lisa's early childhood philosophy comes from a combination of early childhood education focus courses at the university, prior experiences in teaching in preschool programs, and from her own early childhood experiences as expressed through her biographical conversations. She articulates the feelings of what it is to experience separation anxiety as a child, and how it affects a school-aged child to be controlled and held back by institutional systems. She expresses an empathy and advocacy for

children that is sensitive due to her own lived early school experiences. As a child, Lisa had a loving and nurturing family with ties to the school situation, yet she was not immune from very negative experiences at school. These negative experiences were recalled as vividly as were the warm and secure experiences with her family.

During the student teaching situation, Lisa describes how the children were rarely empowered and she reacts to this situation with moral indignation. In her eyes, and as explained by Goodlad (1990), there is a lack of just and right behavior when children are offered no choices and are controlled for arbitrary and bureaucratic ends. Lisa offers no excuses for adults who do not put the needs and interests of children as a first priority; however, her concerns were expressed most professionally and solutions were suggested for the children's development and learning. She talked about opportunities for children to experience more first hand activities, for these activities to be open-ended, and particularly for children to be involved in the planning of integrated topics. This ability to suggest solutions rather than just criticizing the situation seemed to take her beyond the development of the traditional preservice teacher. Also, as she has had considerable experience with young children in summer camps and daycare employment, her advanced development in teacher education may not be a unique or isolated experience, but more typical of the type of student choosing early childhood education as a teaching career.

Lisa's problem solving and inquiry approaches in teaching were most likely indicative of her approach to many of her lived experiences. She has an attitude of taking charge of situations when necessary and this quality was pointed out in many incidents from her childhood. Examples include everything from a fourth grade episode of stopping an older child on the school bus who was teasing her about her long underwear, to deciding to leave the province to attend bible school. Her family lovingly tells Lisa she has a stubborn streak, but perhaps her " take charge" attitude emphasizes leadership qualities and reflects responsibilities learned from her home

chores and family expectations that she do well at school. With an attitude of leadership, she continually describes her intentions and ability to make a difference for children, rather than just hoping to secure a teaching position.

Landscapes

During our conversations, Lisa focused on the needs, interests, and experiences of children, in contrast to an emphasis on her own cognitive skills, knowledge, or her own needs of security. However, one element that appeared to be out of place in connecting the pieces of Lisa's jig-saw puzzle in becoming a teacher was found in her on-going biographical conversations and her written reflection log about the need to control the behavior of the class. She describes feelings of being less successful and uncomfortable in her developing image of herself as teacher because of a perceived lack of being able to exert control over group behavior in a classroom. This need to control her educational contexts was expressed in a myriad of ways and conveyed a sense of insecurity about beginning teaching that her usual expression of confidence could not conceal. An education student's self-esteem requires continual cultivation (Clark, 1988, Katz, 1993), and although from my observations she handled the student-teaching classroom environment very capably, she described how she would go home after school and cry with frustration. What a distinct plea for the acknowledgment of strengths, for being creative instead of having the expected right answer, and for having the sense of power to self-direct learning and support others!

Support

Collaboration and partnerships have been an ongoing and integral part of Lisa's family. Her parents operated the milking and farming operations by themselves for several years and Lisa describes that when the children were young, her parents milked between 40 and 50 cows night and morning for 365 days a year. Her dad also grain

farmed and did all his own field work. Her mother not only shared the milking chores, mothered four girls, and organized her house, but was regularly employed as a substitute teacher. It was not until Lisa was in the third grade that their first hired man came to live on the farm, bringing his wife and two boys. This employment arrangement not only brought differing perspectives on responsibilities, but the boys expanded the opportunities for play to the small girls who had lived a pretty sheltered and quiet life other than school and church. There were many big games of such things as tag and hide and seek, and because her family now only had to milk on weekends, her Mom and Dad seemed to have more time for the girls and church activities. In families that own dairy farms there is always a great deal of cooperative work and individual responsibility, and according to Lisa this was most definitely true of her family.

> We always had delegated jobs and most of my jobs were outside rather than inside. One of my responsibilities through elementary and junior high was feeding the chickens and gathering eggs. Then my dad got into raising and training dogs to work cattle. We would have six dogs at a time and it became my job to feed them. My oldest sister was always doing homework and she seemed to get out of many chores, and my other sisters did most of the dishes. When I was in grade seven we didn't have a hired man for a year and so my next oldest sister and I took turns milking with my dad every morning and night. We alternated and one of us would do a couple of mornings and the other one would do a couple of evenings. There were about 50 cows and we would start at six in the morning. When we were finished we would clean up, rush to the house, get ready for school, and hop on the bus. After about a year we got another hired man, and then we only had to milk on weekends again. We had to do a lot of work, but because we did it together it wasn't too bad.

Another perception of Lisa is her expectation of support from others. This expectation is not surprising given her family and social experiences but in our society of competition, grades, and awards it is refreshing to see the collaborative and supportive bonds that the participants developed during their practicum experiences.

Lisa's conversations were full of examples of support of, and support from, her fellow students. For example, when student teaching expectations regarding her unit were abruptly changed, she immediately went to the student teacher next door to tell her story and solicit support. The story of the ripped tape was another example of asking for support, and Lisa told with such feeling how Kellie consoled her and how good it felt to have friends when you experience difficult times. Her most poignant story regarding support came from the issue of the reflections-on-demand aspect of student teaching.

> Reflections were rather a new concept for me when I started student teaching. We did have a class called reflective practice but we discussed other things, so when student teaching started I looked forward to reflecting on things that happened with the children and to think about my contributions to the class. Instead my reflection time was scheduled at lunch with the other student teachers and the school practicum coordinator decided the issues that we would reflect on that day. It was more like a university class for me and it was reflection on demand. Then at the end of the day we would sit down and the teacher would reflect on her day and evaluate my contributions. Talk about pressure. I kept looking for a collaborative reflective practicum, instead I felt it was just an authoritarian situation where I did what I was told. Reflection time was disappointing to say the least.

From the examples of networking in her conversations about current realities, Lisa displays an awareness of those social contacts that can give life to a teaching context. It is no longer enough to passively learn the principles, knowledge, and skills to manage a classroom, but there is a need to focus on working relationships, to keep in sight the fundamental purpose of building trust and cooperation with others, and to share the responsibility of the development and learning of children.

Conclusion

From Lisa's conversations, two groups of experiences appear to have had the most effect on her teaching preparation program. First, some of her most vividly

remembered early school experiences provided examples of cognitive dissonance when compared with her early family and church experiences. Enjoying school is important and school work is something to be mastered, but for Lisa, those loving, supportive moments are still reserved for family times and church activities. Family is definitely the major influence in Lisa's value and belief structures. The perceptions she brings from her early social experiences advocate moral responsibility and ethical concerns. In her conversations it is the children in her present classes and from her prior work experiences who are her main concern, and she discusses the lack of organization and resources and the misconceptions of staff for providing stimulating and safe environments for young children.

A most pleasant surprise in my conversations with Lisa comes from her well developed concepts of the principles which she holds about developing educational opportunities for young children and she gives examples of implementation processes from prior experiences. For example, she outlines the need for children to make choices, to have first hand experiences, and to structure situations so they may have the opportunity to learn through play. From her student teaching reflection logs, she outlined examples of activities that she feels helped children learn. In my student teaching observations, I saw Lisa try to work around a classroom of psychometric worksheets and workbook exercises to provide some real-world teachable moments for children.

Even with Lisa's positive interpersonal skills and proactive approaches to situations, one negative aspect from her biographical conversations was her dismay and frustration during the practicum with the perceived lack of communication and collaboration with her teacher. Lisa perceived that the teacher believed in an apprenticeship model of student-teacher socialization and she felt she was allowed little choice and/or empowerment. To obtain a good grade she chose to carry the burden of dissonance and to seek emotional support from friends and family. She

explained that some nights she would come home in tears, especially worrying about evaluation. Although the teacher would periodically state how pleased she was with Lisa's progress, she continually criticized most of her efforts.

Lisa was aware of the government cut-backs to kindergarten funding and how kindergarten teachers were unsupported by their colleagues during this time. She explained that the teachers in her student teaching placement thought that the previous kindergarten had been "just play time," but the new kindergarten teacher at the school was more organized, more academically oriented and was "doing a better job in preparing her students for the real world of first grade." However, she felt the community and especially parents were supportive of the learner-centered philosophy promoted for many years by Early Childhood Services. As a beginning teacher, she wasn't sure what the future would bring for her in regards to being allowed to be learner-centered in a kindergarten placement.

Cognitive knowledge may come from various courses and/or other sources of knowledge, but very rarely are the ways of knowing of education students or their contextual realities taken into consideration when their teacher preparation programs are structured (Wubbles, 1992). Lisa perceived her non-education courses as being irrelevant to teaching, and she spoke of how little choice she had in designing her Bachelor's of Education program. Paley (1991) suggests that we need to listen to children and trust they will choose relevant opportunities for learning and development. Yet these same opportunities are rarely afforded to preservice teachers. Why must one wait to attend graduate school, if then, before being in one's own power to decide the direction of one's own professional journey. Except for the help of one professor, Lisa never felt she was allowed any power over her teacher preparation program, and yet her awareness of her values, perceptions, and knowledge of children's learning and development which she brought to the program was extensive. Using a constructivist model of building on her knowledge, Lisa's experiences could

have been reconstructed in a spiraling manner to give her more confidence and build more readily on her knowledge and strengths of character. Weinstein (1990), Wodlinger (1985), and Rodriquez (1993) suggest that the introduction of reflective practices, which Lisa describes in her journal, have been very useful in preparing teachers. Lisa's biographical conversations also contain the notion that by actively listening to preservice teachers and building on their perceptions, beliefs, and values, a more learner-centered way of knowing can be experienced.

Biographical Conversations With Kellie

Early Experiences

> I come from a very strong Catholic family. My father was a vice-principal at the separate school in our town and my uncle also taught there. Dad said when they finished University and were looking for jobs there were two openings at that school and both brothers were hired. Also, my aunt is a junior high English teacher at the same school, and my dad's cousin and his wife (my godparents) teach in the elementary school. My oldest sister has recently joined the junior high teaching staff as well.

As Kellie and I begin a series of conversations about her past and current experiences and how these may relate to her teacher preparation experiences, it soon becomes evident that teachers and school related activities have been an integral part of her life for as long as she remembers. Many of her immediate and extended family members are or have been teachers in the same separate school in which Kellie spent all her school life. Her very close relationship with her father and his gentle persuasion has made the idea of her becoming a kindergarten teacher a life long goal.

> Just seeing my dad as a teacher probably made me always want to work with children. He had tremendous respect from parents and every student wanted to get into his class. At an early age I was given one of these little memory books which has a little place to write what you are going to be when you grow up. I always put down I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher.

Kellie's life remains centered around her loving family and her parents continue to be very supportive. From the modeling of both parents, she has learned kindness, thoughtfulness, and charity. Also, she has a close relationship with her sisters and many happy hours during childhood were spent with cousins and friends.

> I think I had an excellent childhood. My mother is a very caring and nurturing person and I don't really remember any harsh memories growing up. She just loves children and gave me really good examples of how to treat people in general. My next oldest sister and I have always been close. When we were little we had our own little playroom downstairs and played Barbies and other imaginative things until we were in grade six or seven. As well, we played outside in the yard for hours and would go to a park near our house and build forts in the trees. We had friends whose house borders on the park and with them we did many fun things.

Kellie's first school experiences were very positive and she remembers her kindergarten teacher as caring and sensitive. There were many opportunities during her first year at school to play with relatives and friends and she remembers this year as a time of positive family experiences.

> I remember my very first day of kindergarten as my mom had dressed me all up and I had this bucket of things we were supposed to take. I felt very important, but when it was time for my mom to leave I remember I cried. However, there were kids that I knew already, especially my cousin Jason, and I don't think I worried very long. My two older sisters were in school in the morning and I always remember this as a special time at home with my mom. My mom is a nurse and she often worked nights and in the morning she would be very tired and would rest on the couch. At the same time she would play with me and I remember feeling so grown up as she let me put curlers in her hair. My dad would come home at lunch and then he would take me back to

> school for afternoon kindergarten. When Dad and I went to school, Mom would go to bed for the afternoon.

Kellie felt her world was very protected and secure. The safety which Kellie experienced and which accounted for her feelings of confidence, now provides her with the means of reaching out to her students and other teachers to make them feel secure and capable. I observed that as she worked with students and teachers in her student teaching placement, she modeled attitudes of empathy and respect for others.

Values

> Material things are just not important to my parents. Of course we always had things we needed but I wouldn't even ask for something unnecessary like a video game or something like that. However, if it was something I really wanted, I may get it for my birthday. We have a nice house and car but we were always taught that we don't need to have the best of everything. My parents have always had a different attitude than my uncle (my mother's brother). Part of this difference comes from my aunt who is an only child and her parents are quite wealthy. They only have to buy gifts for the one set of grandchildren. On the other hand I come from a family that is huge. My grandma would knit mitts and I would be happy with that because she would have to knit sixty pairs of mitts and my Mom would always let us know what she had done. I appreciate growing up in an environment like that because it helps me realize that there are priorities in life other than material things.

The strong church background of Kellie's extended family probably was a contributing factor in her understanding and empathy for young children. Examples of caring and thoughtfulness by extended family members centered around church activities and family gatherings. For example, Kellie's mother always introduced Kellie to her teacher at church and often Kellie would be included in church and school social activities with her teachers and their families. Many of these teachers were close friends of the family and Kellie remembers feeling special about being included in these out of school activities. The modeling of teachers as amiable, affectionate, and

considerate individuals was very important to Kellie and modeling consideration and respect for children seems very important to her.

Given our society's impersonal and materialistic orientation, it is refreshing to encounter parents who encouraged their child to develop caring attitudes and moral responsibility. Insights articulated by Kellie display sensitivity, respect, and a centering on young children that go beyond expectations of a neophyte teacher. A beginning teacher's development usually centers on their own fears, problems, and concerns (Kagan, 1992), and like her friend Lisa, Kellie continually discusses children's needs and feelings rather than her own anxieties. Kellie's biographical accounts assist in explaining her beliefs and values. If the questions I posed to Kellie invited a negative reply, she would find some way to respond which portrayed the situation or the individual in a more favorable manner. As I reread our conversations many times, I was constantly amazed at how positively she viewed the world. One example of this optimism centers around the time she was in elementary school and her father was sick and eventually hospitalized. His illness was serious, but until he was hospitalized, Kellie didn't realize that anything was wrong. She knows her mother supported her dad and at the same time protected the girls by keeping everything as normal as possible. The girls were encouraged during this crisis to continue with their responsibilities at home and school, and as well they were assisted to see that a situation can be controlled and things can be made better if we work together. Kellie continually demonstrates a gentle assurance in her manner and an ability to articulate the positive side of things. This positive outlook appears as a firm foundation for recognizing the benefits of teaming and she promotes the notion that together things can be made better than what one is able to do alone (Bruffee, 1995).

A second example of such positive thinking is shown through her approach to others. Her first grade teacher, from Kellie's recollections, was abusive to children. However, Kellie shows an unusual ability not to condemn this teacher but to look for

ways this situation could be made better for children and at the same time maintaining respect for the role of the teacher.

> Maybe I shouldn't say anything negative about another teacher, but first grade was not the best and I remember that I was really scared of my teacher. She was very dictator like even to the expression on her face. Students couldn't talk and I remember that she would hit some children's hands if work wasn't completed. However, I don't know if she understood what she was doing as maybe it was her misguided way of getting the facts across about her values and priorities. For example, we were made to eat everything in our lunch boxes and she checked our lunch boxes every day before we could go outside to play. I use to sit there with my uneaten lunch and cry and cry and eventually I started getting sick. My mom caught on and my parents told the teacher if I didn't eat everything just to send it home. Also, my mom stopped putting so much lunch in my box and I was assured that the teacher would no longer be looking through my lunch box or making me eat everything. I believe it was still legal to use corporal punishment at this time and I think she (the teacher) thought it was her responsibility to teach children some responsibility about respecting food as there are children in the world who are starving. However, I don't think that was how our church saw people raising children. I think most used a more moderate way to have children develop their values or morals instead of trying to force children to be sympathetic to others.

A third example of Kellie's ability to look at the "glass half-full syndrome" is her dialogue about a university course where students were told they would be assessed on cooperation principles instead of competition. Their field-based assignments were handed in as their sequential projects were completed and presented and these assignments were graded by a graduate student. It was discovered that too many high marks were being given from this field-based assignment and the students were told that the remaining papers would be graded more closely. Many of the assignments handed in later were perceived as getting lower grades. The feelings in the class, according to Kellie, became anything but cooperative.

> I didn't get my assignment back until two months later and I didn't feel the final grade reflected my work. However, I believe professors have to work under the university system, and so they have little control

> over the system requirements of a range of grades. Also, the students may say they want to work cooperatively, but because they need high grades for awards and jobs there is a tendency to subtle or not so subtle competition.

Experiences With Young Children

Prior experiences and perceptions of education students may be important reasons why students choose an early childhood focus area in their teacher preparation program (Katz, 1995). From Kellie's family influence, it seemed like the decision to become a teacher may have been made years earlier, but I was not prepared for the quantity and quality of experiences with young children which was brought to her undergraduate work. She came to the program with a wealth of experiences with young children, beginning with a work experience in high school in which she worked in a kindergarten room three times a week. She feels very strongly that this experience specifically reinforced her desire to study young children.

> I had always had baby-sitting jobs, but it was during my work experience in high school that I found I really, really liked this early childhood age group and it was exciting to get involved in different activities with the children. At times I would make things for the teacher, work with one child, or supervise on the playground. The kindergarten teacher was very supportive of my work with the children and at the end of the term I received a grade of 100%.

During her senior high school year, Kellie missed the application deadline for the University and decided to work at a local day care for the following year. She enjoyed this experience and developed a close relationship with the staff. She considered staying at this job and although she realized that the pay was not adequate to become self supporting, she vacillated in her decision of either attending a community college for a two year diploma or attending the university for her bachelor's degree in education. Although she feels the final decision was her own, her mother strongly encouraged her to become a teacher.

> At the day care I learned so much about what individual children need and how to treat each little person. You are almost like a second mother to some of them because they are there so many hours each day. The first summer break from the university I also worked at the day care, and I planned a second summer there but found I couldn't stay because they had hired a new director and the disorganization became unbearable. I think members of the staff were capable but now there seemed to be no planning and everything was chaotic. There were many confrontations between children which I think came from a lack of activities and an inappropriate environment. For example, all the doors were kept closed and the children couldn't see what was happening in the next room. If I opened the door, immediately staff would see that it was closed. Also, there was nothing to do on the playground. The children were outside from 3:30 until 5:00 PM or when the parents picked them up. After about 30 minutes they began fighting, crying, and wanting their parents. I would try and play with these sad children but I felt frustrated in not being allowed to change anything. I only stayed a few days during the second summer.

Given Kellie's previous tendencies to work at making situations better, it was interesting that she felt so strongly about this situation that she did not remain with the summer job at the day care. As she gained more self-confidence in her teacher preparation program she may have been unprepared to allow her understandings to be disallowed. Also, becoming a teacher with the promise of more respect and a better salary may have given her the confidence to refuse what in her perception was an unhealthy environment for children. Thus, she experienced the dichotomy in certification and salary between teaching and care which may occur when attempting to provide programs for the development and learning of young children (LaGrange, 1991). This dichotomy may have contributed to Kellie's feelings of frustration and helplessness.

Other Family and School Experiences

> I don't think my parents ever said to do better than my sister, but as a child you want to please your parents as much as possible. However, it

> was hard to do as well as my sister because I don't think I was as smart at school. I have to study pretty hard to get good grades, and I'm not one of those people who can just see something and know it. I don't want to brag but I was quite popular at school and my sister wasn't nearly as social. Being good at sports was another way for me to excel as I'm very sports minded and she prefers academic things.

Although Kellie fondly vocalized her early childhood experiences, she was also very articulate about family and school experiences during adolescence. These critical accounts describe the importance of the presence of her sisters, her popularity at school, and the influence of significant others. All the significant people which Kellie talked about were members of her immediate or extended family. In addition to her parents, her sisters have probably had the most effect, especially the sister nearest in age to Kellie. The most critical account concerning her sister comes from a sort of loving personal rivalry that evolved over later school years and into university. Although it doesn't appear that her parents encouraged competition, Kellie's social intelligence probably explains much of her need to do well. Since her father was vice-principal of the school, Kellie experienced a real or perceived pressure to meet high academic standards, yet she never did as well academically as her sister. I found it very interesting in our conversations that Kellie never mentioned her sisters by name. I wonder if she savors a time for reflections on her personal practical knowledge without competition of siblings or is it more likely that within her family inner circle she is so secure that she doesn't need to set herself apart for acknowledgment and recognition? Most of the others in Kellie's life who have had considerable influence on her learning and development include extended family members who are connected with the separate school in her home town.

> I would say that my godparents, that is my father's cousin and his wife were very important to my development. They were there for pretty well everything that was important in my life. They always were supportive and each time I saw them they would have something positive to say. When I would see them at church they would always talk about school and they always remembered my birthdays and other

important times in my life. Last term when I started my practicum, I was afraid, but my godfather listened to my fears and said he was sure I would do fine because I have always done well at school. His wife Sherry is much the same kind of person. I don't think she has ever said a mean word about anybody in her life.

An image which assists me in interpreting the role of significant others in Kellie's life is that the separate school is like a family business. When the parent steps down or retires the children assume the work responsibility. Kellie's dad has recently retired, her sister teaches in the junior high school and Kellie is going back to this same school next year as a kindergarten teacher. It appears that teaching is not just a job for Kellie, it is a way of life.

Current Concerns and Perceptions

Through biographical conversations which are grounded in Kellie's past and current experiences, her reflections infer that her family has a considerable effect on her teacher preparation. With the close relationship Kellie shares with her sister, she had a very realistic image of the expectations to be encountered in her teacher education courses, but even armed with the knowledge related by her sister, she expressed a lack of confidence regarding the mystic of university. Upon entering the university degree program she found little support for her personal practical knowledge.

> I understand that part of our responsibility is to get a well rounded education. My courses gave me differing perspectives and probably helped me to be more open minded, but I found little in my courses about teaching practice in the first two years of university. We did have one practicum class but we talked mostly about other things and I didn't feel any connection between the course and the school. For the most part university teaching isn't on a personal level. For example, we are told we have to get to know our students but even in small classes many professors don't get to know our names. They seem to preach about, but don't live, the personal aspects of teaching. I only found two

> courses, and these were early childhood education courses, that were really concerned about what happened to children in a classroom.

This perceived lack of personalization in her teaching preparation program was a common recurring theme in Kellie's conversations. Usually these perceptions centered around evaluation procedures or moral dimensions in education. The unfairness she perceived within the university system of grading may be expected, given her long time concern with the moral aspects of fairness and just behaviors and with her previous anxiety about marks and grading. She was somewhat insecure with her own academic capabilities coming into the teacher education program, and, in her opinion, little seemed to be in the system to change the focus from the "game" of getting good grades to individual learning opportunities. With such well articulated feelings about assessment, it appears that Kellie would be an ideal candidate to undertake in-depth work with authentic assessment. Two examples regarding authentic assessment are found in Kellie's biographical accounts. One example outlines her concerns about evaluation experiences in her university courses and another example concerns the assessment of children.

> It seems to me that we are setting up collaboration in university among students to fail. Everyone wants top grades on their transcripts so in our courses the system requires that we are competitive with each other. However, just because you are a nine average student, does that transfer into the reality that you will be a better teacher for young children? I believe that people who have had to struggle to compete in an inequitable situation may be better prepared to relate to kids who also have to struggle.

Kellie eloquently expresses that maybe what is stressed in university classes may need to be revalued or revisited to make it more relevant to the needs of a soon-to-be-certified teacher. In her perception, the grading system does not reflect those qualities and values of a teacher who is sensitive and makes a difference for individual children. She expressed concern that students who get lower marks on their

university transcript feel they may not be able to compete for the few available teaching positions, and yet, some of these individuals may have good communication skills and moral values that will make a difference in the lives of children. She felt some professors did not value these personal qualities and even though some instructors try to live their beliefs of collaboration, active teaching and constructivist learning, it seems like the system of content mastery wins because that is what is being measured. Also, she contemplates contexts that can block preservice teachers' view of what is really important, and wondered if the learner-centered aspects she was learning can be taken to a teaching position or if education students are too often working, only to get good grades. She explained that these should be the same things but often she finds that, as a student, she perceives few benefits by completing some required assignments.

> The expectations I have of myself is to develop characteristics and qualities so I may be sensitive to and make a difference for children. The marks in a teacher education course may show something of what one knows about teaching, but a test of thirty questions is not going to accurately reflect my knowledge, especially my understanding of children, or if I can help children learn. I believe that we need to recognize the progress a child has made through assessment, perhaps starting back at point A and getting to point B. Perhaps he's not at the same standard with the child who came in at point B, but the first child may have progressed further. Each year there is a wide range of progress and achievement in a class and thus assessment should not only reflect standardized expectations for that particular year or grade. Also, I am concerned about teaching to the final examination as so much pressure is put on the teacher as well. It is an unbroken circle as children are pressured to do well because their marks reflect the quality of their teaching, and from these marks a teacher's competence is judged.

As Kellie talks about testing and grades, she seems to struggle with balancing a role identity of teacher directed and learner-centered proficiencies. As with many of her conversations, Kellie relates her own experiences to how she interacts with

children and she discusses how the expectations and assessment of individual children should reflect more than just the curriculum of that grade. Through the articulation of her own experiences with assessment, Kellie has come to a tentative understanding about children's assessment. With the perceptions and understandings gained from her previous experiences and early childhood course work, she now appears in a position to learn to develop assessment processes that may discover what children know and where they are in their development and learning as a basis for deciding how they can be assisted in the future. NAEYC (1991) and Bredekemp (1987) point out that many educational professionals question whether individual teacher's assessment procedures about children's progress can be unbiased and whether the educational system can be convinced that such accountability would meet objectives of high standards in learning. Yet NAEYC strongly suggests the constructivist approach in designing appropriate programs to meet the development and learning needs of young children. In so doing they suggest that programs, and the children in the programs, be authentically assessed. This may logically conclude that teachers need to first understand their own development through experiences and authentic assessment so they may approach programs for young children in a caring and pedagogical rational manner and can learn to assess what is relevant and meaningful to the child.

When encouraged to discuss assessment experiences, Kellie emphasized her strong beliefs in authentic assessment that reflected her personalized experiences. Given our discussions about the role of assessment and Kellie's reflection of her own ambivalence about evaluation, her efficacy may be increasingly recognized as a pivotal variable influencing her future practices (Moore& Esselman, 1992, Walker, 1992). She expressed few doubts about her ability to perform the actions required to bring about individual student's learning and development but she had some very strong feelings about contextual realities that may be influential in preventing positive collaborative outcomes of student development and learning. Her reflections on her past experiences

with young children gave her a confidence about interacting with individual children but she had some concerns about controlling the behavior of a class for optimum learning to occur. She explained that the student teaching practicum had been very instrumental in making her feel she could be responsible for a whole class of children. However, even with her former experiences with children, she had felt unprepared for student teaching where she was expected to teach the whole group. Surprisingly, Kellie did not choose to spend a great deal of time discussing her practicum experiences. She had engaged in the tasks required of her in the student teaching practicum with a willingness and persistence to succeed and her feelings of success were self-evident and reflected in positive evaluations. Comments that reflect this positive summary included such things as: provides an excellent role model for students, is a gentle and caring person who relates well to children, and is working at accommodating individual differences.

One of the suggestions made by the teachers was to interact more dynamically with the children. In our conversations, Kellie explained her desire to model the quiet and gentle style of her father as teacher.

> My dad never raised his voice in the classroom, yet students lined up to be in his classroom. The tremendous respect he earned from parents and students is encouraging me to develop the same style of teaching. My mother and father were very good examples of how to treat people in general. Those are the qualities I hope to be able to model as a teacher. I want to interact with students consistent with the values I think are important.

Although her school facilitators suggested that Kellie had to be more enthusiastic, energetic, and dynamic in her presentation and instruction, as a researcher I am caused to contemplate that their suggestions say more about how these teachers perceived their own success rather than explaining how Kellie could be more effective. As the university liaison in her student teaching placement, I never observed a lack of

enthusiasm or energy in Kellie's teaching presentations. Instead, I observed a quiet strength to which the children responded and which needed to be supported and encouraged. I also observed a greater confidence evolving for working with whole groups of children. Are theatrical and dramatic performances required? Who is listening to Kellie?

Seeking to understand contextual realities, such as those found in the teaching preparation program or the student teaching practicum, Kellie centers on such moral dimensions as fairness or trust for individuals in dealing with institutional limitations. Her conversations reflect reactions to contexts, arbitrary and controlling procedure, and how individuals will be able to meet their goals. She discussed at length her experiences in the summer child care situation and how she observed the sincerity of the staff, but because of a lack of organization and support, the situation became intolerable. Unable to affect changes, she left the situation, showing her willingness to stand-up for her convictions. The issue of the cuts to Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs was another contingency to be overcome. A third issue was her struggle with the equity issue of treating each child fairly, dealing with diversity, and becoming aware of bias.

> In my student teaching classroom, it was very obvious that one boy loved school and he was frequently the first one to raise his hand to answer questions. Unconsciously, I would let him interrupt me or other students, and although not purposeful, I discovered myself favoring him. I struggled with the concept that because he is bright and articulate and if I don't let him say what he needs to say I may make him think what he has to say is not important. On the other hand, he commands attention which is not fair to the other children. They allow him to dominate the conversation perhaps because he is first allowed by the teacher. I did a lot of thinking about how I could meet his needs while not disallowing time and energy to the other children.

Developing Role Identity As A Teacher

As teaching always has been a central part of Kellie's life, her identity as a prospective teacher has many possible influences. Members of her extended family have been the central models or mentors as previously discussed, but to see herself as a separate functioning professional, her images of her own elementary and secondary teachers were recalled and revisited. Her mother often introduced her teachers to her at church and school functions and because of her father's position at the school many of her teachers visited her family home. Interestingly, she suggested images for many of these teachers whom she knew socially as well as in the classroom. The images created by Kellie ranged from her dreaded first grade teacher which she pictured as a mean little ferret to the teacher who was referred to as the joker. The students thought his class was one big joke and so they didn't do any work for him. If they didn't do his assignments then it was thought to be his fault, and in those early high school years, Kellie didn't think she had been taught to wisely use that kind of freedom. Her favorite elementary teacher was her loving second grade teacher. She was a hugger and Kellie would try to stand by her desk and get individual help which usually meant having the teacher's arm around her. Kellie also created an image for her own concept of teaching.

> For me, teaching is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Sometimes all the pieces seem to fall into place, while at other times, one may spend hours trying to make piece after piece fit. Sometimes you may think you have the puzzle complete, but then discover that there is one piece missing. You may search and search for this missing piece, sometimes you find it, but sometimes you don't, and the picture is left unfinished.

Biographical Conversations With Sharon

> As a child, my family made me feel special because I did well at school, and as far back as elementary school, I always wanted to be a teacher. However, circumstances don't always allow us a straight path to our goals. After high school I married and started a family. My interest in children and teaching grew along with my children and my husband's career in education. When my youngest child started school, I became an ECS teaching aide for the next 12 years, obtaining a teacher aide's diploma along the way. One day I found myself listening to the teacher and thinking that if I was teaching the lesson I would do it differently. I suddenly realized that if I was thinking this way, then I should do something about it. When we moved to the city a year or so later, I took the opportunity to begin University with the goal of getting my degree in early childhood education.

Sharon was not a teacher education student who entered university immediately following high school. She came to her teacher education with rich life-long learning experiences and a very well developed sense of where she wants to begin in the field of education. Her own parents lacked educational opportunities but stressed the benefits of education for their children. However, Sharon came from a generation where getting married right out of high school was fashionable and she devoted 20 years to her husband and his career, as well as, raising their own children. Experiences with her own family, coupled with 12 years of employment as an assistant in an ECS program, have allowed Sharon to develop beliefs and knowledge about early childhood education that many teachers have not realized until after years of classroom experience. Such extensive experiences gave Sharon an advantage in constructing and reconstructing personal teaching knowledge and her reflections show an advanced level of development and learning.

Equity

Studying Sharon's transcribed conversations and reflecting on the observations of her interaction with children, one of the most interesting concepts I discovered was

her emphasis and identification of equity and diversity issues with young children and their teachers. She began identifying equity issues by describing differing family role expectations for her brother because he was a boy, her father's role as the definite decision maker in the family, and her husband's expectations for his young wife to be a non-working, stay-at-home mom. Sharon's own childhood was comfortable and secure, surrounded by very loving parents and a close-in-age, compatible brother. She describes her mother as generous and accommodating. The family always came first in her mother's life and many of Sharon's choices follow her mother's self-sacrificing behavior.

> My parents were very compatible and discussed everything, but my dad was definitely the head of our family. When I think of all Mom did for my dad, my brother, and me, I am quick to realize I never could be as giving. For example, my dad couldn't bring himself to move away from his own mother, which resulted in the four of us living in a one bedroom apartment attached to the back of my grandmother's rather large house. Although, I realize every situation depends on circumstances, my mom was so accommodating. She wanted her own house, but it wasn't until after my grandmother passed away and I was in 6th grade that we finally moved into our own new house.

From Sharon's recollections, her grandmother, who lived in an attached house did not look after her grandchildren on a consistent basis. When Sharon started school, her mother went back to work. She would meet the children at home for lunch, walk them back to school, and then go back to work until 4:00 PM. She also worked on Saturday.

> I was expected to help with the housework before I could go out on Saturday to play. My job was to wash the floors, clean the bathroom and make sure that my room was clean. But I don't remember my brother having anything specific that he had to do and these same expectations went right into high school. I was helping Mom because Dad certainly wasn't down cleaning floors. In our family our roles primarily were based on gender. My brother didn't start the laundry, he

didn't do the cooking, and he didn't clean. However, I am sure that if you ever said to my Dad that he was gender biased, he would be horrified to learn that he treated his children in discriminating ways. It was such an accepted way of life at that time.

Education became Sharon's vision for equity.

Education was a very important part of our lives. My dad thought education was extremely important for his children, maybe coming, in part, from the fact that he did not get as much formal education as he would have liked. Therefore, it was extremely important that we get an education. My brother was a disappointment to my dad, especially as he had academic problems in high school. My brother went to the same academic high school as my dad, played football where my dad had played football, but seemed frequently stressed and continually struggled with his course work. He went to college for a year, probably to please my dad, and was pushed into a program he shouldn't have tried. Finally he dropped out. There were similar expectations for me and I was a better academic student in high school. Often my dad would remark that it was important to get a university education, even for a girl. However, I only finished three out of four years of the high school matriculation program before Jim and I were married. After seven years of marriage and three children, my husband wanted to go back to University for a teaching degree. I remember telling him that I would support him in furthering his education, but I didn't want the changes to interfere with our family.

However, changes did begin to happen. Sharon's passive attitudes were altered and she had become very self-confident about her ability to assume working and then to pursue a teaching career. Her husband's career and her children's needs had previously placed Sharon's professional aspirations into second place, but now she made a conscious decision to fulfill her life-long ambition of becoming a teacher. She feels her mother-in-law, who experienced some very difficult health and personal problems was very influential in modeling how to cope with a lack of opportunities. Sharon expresses the belief that most of us can achieve our goals if we can just find the right time in our lives. Education is a life-long learning process for Sharon and she

describes the vision and maturity required to deal with children's rights and equity issues.

> To me, it is a priority to provide security for all children. I have become very skeptical about how secure children feel within their own homes and what assistance children can receive if they are subjected to inappropriate environments. I am concerned that society has lost its perspective on what children may go through and I am concerned that even when aspects of neglect and abuse are identified that very little is done to change the situation for the child. It seems that many citizens think the number of children with problems are too insignificant to become alarmed. However, I believe we must be there even if only one child needs help. And if we neglect to provide secure environments for young children, then by the time they are adolescents we may be dealing with much larger societal problems.

Sharon displays a perspective of maturity and espouses a vision of equity for all. It is a value that may have evolved from her rich life experiences, personal reflections, and a willingness to serve others. Those such as her mother-in-law have shown her that success is attainable, and Sharon has internalized the beliefs, values, and knowledge for developing a personal and professional perspective of empathy and advocacy for young children.

Special Populations

In the teacher preparation program, Sharon expected to learn about including special populations into an early childhood environment. However, she discovered that to work with special populations she needed specific special education courses.

> I wanted to know how to deal with the inclusion of special needs children into the regular classroom. What are identified as special needs, how do we work with these children, what steps do we take for getting appropriate help, and how do we write IEP'S to develop an appropriate program for each child? I have never aspired to be a special education teacher but I know from working in ECS programs that we are going to have some special needs children in our classes.

Sharon is an advocate for children, and as Elkind (1989) discusses, she views children as the priority or as the basic subject matter for decision making and program development. One current issue for Sharon concerns throw-away children. Too frequently in our "instant gratification" society, if children's needs are in conflict with a parent's immediate goals ,then the children's needs are not recognized. For example, it may be perfectly acceptable from the parent's point of view to have the child live in a one parent situation, to be sent to live with extended family, or even to live in poverty and be left to the social welfare system (Elkind, 1995). Loss of governmental support for early programs is another concern discussed by Sharon, as is "the hurried child syndrome." Elkind (1989) defines the hurried child syndrome as children being expected to grow up quickly and assume responsibilities to alleviate parental concern. In addition, many children are pressured to achieve at advanced arbitrary standards so parents will be viewed as super parents. Some major concerns discussed in Sharon's biographical conversations were the lack of children's rights, especially in child support issues, and the gender bias in our society which makes situations unequal and insecure for women and children. She explains using the example of a divorcing couple with two children, where the husband wants to have an agreement before they go before the family court. At most, he has agreed to pay $200 a month per child. This is an educated, middle-class person who says when both of the children are in school, the support can be reduced because they will no longer need child care. The custodial parent feels she can support the children if she must, and to have him out of her life, she will accept less financial support. According to Sharon, this woman seems intimidated even though she is a well educated professional. Although this example may be viewed as a women's issue, it still concerns children who will ultimately be affected.

Such accounts may be examples of how the system, instead of working to protect children's rights, does not view children as a priority in our society. Parental

rights or adults rights continue to be paramount even to the detriment of some young children. For example the United Nations Charter of Rights for Children stays unratified in many locations, including Alberta. The primary needs of young children continue to be discounted, perhaps because children have no voice, no money, and no political votes. Thus, whenever budget or other service cuts are made in education or family services, the greatest detrimental effects are usually on our youngest citizens. Who speaks for our young children and how can teachers advocate for the learning, development, and welfare of young children? This dilemma seems to be at the heart of the issue about which Sharon speaks so eloquently.

More and more of our young children are subjected to live in poverty in this society (Children's Defense Fund, 1994). Thus, how can we continue to espouse the progress we are making in education? There is so much energy and resources for such things as technological capability and advances, but more and more of our young children are living in disadvantaged situations (Elkind, 1995). Perhaps the conception of educational progress is only a myth. As a society, should we not make children our first priority and recognize them as the most precious resource that we have? When those who are our future are properly nurtured and nourished, then there may be some hope for equity of development and learning for all.

Perceptions of Teacher Education

> I was ready to get on with this next phase of my life. I knew what I wanted to do, and I knew what courses would help me reach this goal. I didn't need more time to become mature.

Sharon recognized many relevant experiences in her life that could assist in her teacher preparation program and she was ready to "quit wasting time and get into teaching practices." She discussed her disappointment that her life-long experiences were given little consideration when entering the teaching program at the university.

She had well defined goals and although she realized the university was trying to provide a liberal education by offering a variety of courses, she did not feel the need to spend so much energy and time on the general education component in her teaching education. In her opinion, some of the courses taken during her first two years at the university, although interesting and sometimes amusing, frustrated and delayed her goals of professional development in an experiential base of teaching.

> Whatever fit into my schedule the first couple of years was selected, rather than more appropriate courses to fulfill my goals. By the fourth year, I wanted specific things that I could use in the classroom. I was, and I am, at a point in my life that I know what I want to teach. Perhaps younger students who can't get a job in their focus area will take a position at another level, but I will not. I want early childhood and I will wait until I get it or something that relates to my early childhood degree. I certainly don't feel I have wasted my time. However, I came into the program as an older student, with a different perspective that was seldom taken into consideration. I am not talking about individual privileges but rather I was asking to be empowered to build on my life long experiences of working with young children.

Sharon found the challenge of coming back to university exciting, especially as she found her ability to learn had not diminished, but her interests and outlooks had changed. One perception she had coming into her freshman year was that the university would guide her through the process of requirements for certification. However, she found a lack of communication and many of the processes and procedures of program requirement were learned through the grapevine.

> In my experience, advisors are not readily available or at least you are not encouraged to see an advisor until your third year. Ultimately, I know as a student, I am responsible for my own program, but I guess I still perceived that the system would take care of me, but it didn't happen. The nurturing and supportive environment for the most part is not there, except in some early childhood classes, but the mystique of research is very much there. I have wondered if there is a tendency at this university to want to be considered a graduate level university and undergraduates are only there as second thoughts. I think my expectations of my university program were realistic as my daughter

> was just ahead of me, but I still felt I would rather have gotten into practical situations much sooner. I really looked forward to and appreciated most of my ED EL classes and I think this was mainly due to the fact that they related specifically to children and teaching. This was especially true of the early childhood focus courses. During my third year, I expected the courses to be more relevant, although I quite enjoyed my classes. I was fortunate in my focus area as the instructors were very personal and the classes were more relevant, but they didn't go as far as I would have desired. In reflection, ... I felt there would be some emphasis on my needs and individual development but the only classes who even touched on these issues were the early childhood classes.

Many education students feel that education courses lack academic rigor or are unimportant in their degree program (Holmes, 1990). Sharon discussed that many of the education students complained continually about their elementary education courses. However, it is her opinion that this probably says much more about the perceptions of the students and their expectations about what should go on in a teacher education program than about the benefit of these courses. Because prospective teachers spend many hours watching teaching, perceptions brought to their teacher preparation programs may be inconsistent with reflective practices currently being advocated by some teacher education programs (Doxy, 1992, Beattie, 1996). Some students try to put their own rationalistic perspectives into current reflective teacher education programs and some teacher educators expect students to do what they say rather than what they do. Sharon sums up her expectations of her teacher education program by discussing that in her experience, except for a couple of early childhood instructors, her instructors did not really attempt to assist her to understand how to teach young children.

Teaching Role Identity

How did Sharon develop her incoming role identification? What recollections about her own teachers or other experiences gave her such a mature perspective about

a teaching role? Student teachers learn about 65% to 70% of their teaching behavior during student teaching from modeling the non-verbal behavior of their school based facilitators (Costa & Garmston, 1992). Given these statistics, then the hours spent watching classroom teachers are probably very influential in developing an entry perception of a teaching role. When first beginning our biographical conversations, Sharon recollected few memorable experiences about teachers in her beginning school years. Her selected memories were more focused on upper elementary or secondary teachers. However, one day she started to describe her second grade teacher in terms of color. This use of color led into a rich exploration of imagery about her early school experiences. Her description of her second grade teacher and her learning experiences in this environment were summed up in one sentence, "I remember her class being very brown."

> Within this brown world was an old person who used a foot ruler as a strap, who lifted boys out of their desks by their ears, and who was abrupt and rough. Yet there was an attitude, especially from my home, that teachers had to be respected. Since I was never in any real trouble at school, there was never a dilemma with my parents having to confront the teacher. My third grade teacher, on the other hand, was loving and encouraging. The mood in her classroom reflected her sunny nature and to me this room was bright and sunny. It was a pleasant yellow experience but I can recall nothing memorable happening that year.

The two teachers that Sharon found the most visible in her recollections were her fifth grade and her high school physics teachers. The fifth grade teacher was young and cheerful and gave the class the distinct impression that she was enjoying what she was doing as a teacher. Sharon found the class comfortable, supportive, and joyful and for her, this environment reflected a white sparkly light. The other most memorable teacher discussed by Sharon was a high school teacher who taught physics. He was a football coach and in her eyes very dark, loud, and intimidating.

> The day I finished that class he still scared me but he was one of the best teachers I have ever had because he looked at us as individuals and as people with whom he wanted to share time. He expected us to work very hard, but he could always sense when we were getting frustrated and then he would invite us to talk about absolutely anything. He was, looking back at the situation, and in my opinion, a real listener.

Sharon's notions about the role of a teacher come from three main sources. First, her hours of observations of memorable experiences of her own school teachers, as described above, are among the most influential in the development of her perceptions and beliefs about teaching. Then, her years as an early childhood services assistant provided experiences to develop some very strong principles about good early childhood education. Finally, according to Sharon, her husband is a strong influence in her developing conception of what it means to be a teacher. She feels they have grown together and describes his energy and persistence in challenging them both to develop professionally.

> We always discuss educational issues and opportunities and he has continually encouraged me to change and grow. Through his support, I feel enabled to become strong and confident in my teacher education.

Empowering Learners and Accountability

> In junior high we had this math teacher who was ex-military but he didn't have control or had no idea about students. It was absolute bedlam in his classroom. Kids brought in pop and chips and made it a party time. The scene was like the movies when a teacher turns around and the kids grab something. This teacher never said a thing, and over the years I have been caused to wonder if he cared and just couldn't do his job or if he just didn't care and thought we were the losers. One kid, who was a rebel, would do his homework sheet, put a date at the top, and have the teacher make a checkmark. The next day the kid would black it out, put on a new date, and the teacher would give him another checkmark. At the time I thought this teacher was right out of it and hadn't a clue what this guy was doing. In retrospect, I think of course he noticed and just didn't care. I don't think he lacked a caring attitude because the students may have been irresponsible. I just don't think he really cared about teaching.

As Cannella and Reiff (1994) discuss, to adequately address the needs of other learners, a teacher must first understand him/herself as a learner and to be empowered as a learner, an individual must understand the processes of concept construction through being inquisitive, reflective, enthusiastic, and autonomous. Because of her life-long learning goals, her extensive experiences and her supportive network, Sharon, as a non-traditional student, brought understandings, beliefs, and values to her teacher preparation program beyond the expected developmental stage of a beginning teacher. In her biographical conversations she discusses characteristics of an empowered learner and she talks about such characteristis being encouraged in young children.

Early Childhood Orientation

> When Jim, my husband, began his teaching career, and my youngest child started school, there was a change in my attitude about going to work. Jim supported and encouraged this decision and for the next 12 years I was employed as an early childhood services assistant. Along the way I acquired a teaching aide certificate and I became immersed in everything that was centered on early childhood education.

Sharon discusses her beliefs that kindergarten programs should "provide for the whole child." In her opinion, her ECS experiences gave her the basis for organizing and implementing early childhood education and her understandings were supported by her university classes and her work at the University Child Study Center. However, she is surprised to discover that an orientation of introducing learning concepts to children through exploration and center-based facilitation is not quite what is expected of kindergarten teachers at the present time in the public schools.

> The more I observe and participate in ECS programs, the more I see an emphasis on academic learning of children. If I am fortunate enough to get an ECS position, I may have to change from my comfortable way of working with children and what I learned in my university courses to a method of teaching which is far more directed. Am I out of touch

> with the trends in early childhood education in the schools? During my student teaching, I have asked myself that question many times

The above quotation about Sharon's dilemma is a fascinating example of the issue concerning the socialization or enculturation of a preservice teacher into the structure of a school. On the one hand, Sharon is a mature, self-confident, and experienced early childhood professional with an articulated commitment to learner-centered education for young children. Her undergraduate early childhood program has supported and expanded her child focused and integrated based paradigm of education for young children, but upon her initial entry into an elementary school and her experience with a teacher who was not even an early childhood specialist, she begins to question her child-focused orientation. It is one thing to know she must play the "game" of student teaching to gain the support of the school, but Sharon's expression of doubts and feelings that were in contrast to her previous espoused learner-centered beliefs came from our biographical conversations after the completion of the student-teaching practicum. This contrast in Sharon's beliefs may be compared to students who enter their teacher education with past and current school experiences with traditional learning orientations that are incongruent with the development of current teacher education theories and practices (Eisner, 1991; Weinstein, 1992). Thus, some implicit perceptions, which teacher education students bring to their programs, may overwhelm or surprise the preservice teacher when confronted by the attitudes of society about early childhood programs. In addition, the effect of the conditioning of students to play the school "game" of getting good grades or good teacher evaluations may raise many questions, especially, for students similar to Sharon who bring considerable knowledge about early childhood programs to their teacher preparation. These questions are examples of why Cannella and Reiff (1994) would have us believe that empowered learners, no matter how valid their incoming perceptions, may first need facilitation in recognizing their own learning processes

Such methods as exploration, experimentation, and discovery should challenge existent thinking. Through field-based opportunities, students may be encouraged to make their implicit thoughts, values, and beliefs explicit especially by changing their images concerning teaching.

Surprisingly, the implementation of programs may be in contrast to that which the student professes to believe. For example, Sharon had a very definite idea of how an early childhood program may be structured for the development and learning of "the whole child." This included a conceptualization of how snack time could be structured in the kindergarten day. I discussed with Sharon some differing processes that may more closely match a child's development than the organization she was proposing, but I found that she couldn't, not that she was not willing, change her image of implementation. I was talking with the language of persuasion for I had experienced this differing structure, but she was listening with the language of perception developed from her foundation of experiences. This example illuminates, for me, how little may be learned by a rationalistic approach of imparting information to preservice teachers. Giving or persuading is a comfortable way of teaching for teacher educators as they are coming from their experiences and conceptual bases, but the effects for the passive learner, who is expected to learn the teacher educator's ideas in a constructivist manner, may not be what is intended. Education students may have the language of empowerment, but they may lack experiences within their own education to understand themselves as active learners. For example, Sharon discusses many issues and principles of early childhood education which provide opportunities for choice and solving real problems yet when confronted with public school expectations of psychometric learning, continued to question her own beliefs long after the practicum was completed.

Issues

Some of the early childhood issues for which Sharon holds strong opinions include a lack of services available in the legal system to ensure safe environments for all young children, importance of kindergarten amid funding cuts, child care issues, children's development and learning needs in an educational setting, and family togetherness. Several times in our conversations Sharon returned to the issue of the lack of available services to protect the rights and security of young children. Although she has found that, generally, schools do their best for the welfare of children and families, there is only a limited amount they may do within their mandate. Dean's (1995) accounts of her inner city school being the only safe place in the community for some children because their homes and neighborhoods are a battle field of fists and guns is similar to Sharon's views of children's needs for protection and safety in dysfunctional environments. Sharon discusses the throw-away children for whom the welfare system has neither the resources nor the will to make a difference.

> I recently read that in some states in the United States there are proposals to institutionalize children when there is no foster care available. When we hear about some of the sad incidents involving children and the lack of foster care situations, maybe institutionalized care would be no worse. I can't say I like the idea, but if you had some kind of a group home, with good supervision and all agencies involved and responsible, is that not better than having children placed in a foster home where no one seems to know what is happening to the children. Unfortunately, foster homes may be as uncaring as the homes from which they are removed. What is our responsibility to children? How can we expect them to thrive and learn if we can't give them the environment just to cope and grow?

Sharon goes on to discuss the strong need for early intervention for at-risk children to ameliorate their disadvantages and give individual children the opportunity to develop their full potential. A second assumption that is immediately relevant to Sharon is the importance of kindergarten programs. Her 12 years of experiences as an

assistant in ECS programs help her to view these programs as an integral part of the educational system. She maintains that ECS programs have been success stories, but that teachers and parents have become complacent and trust that the educational decision-makers understand the importance of developmental programs for young children. Since the Alberta Government has slashed the funding for kindergarten, an advocacy for kindergarten programs, previously dormant, is swelling. Early childhood educators and parents who previously complained that ECS programs were not really school are now coming together to lobby for the education of young children. It is very exciting to be a part of a renewed vision of early childhood programs. However, as Sharon discusses the importance of early childhood programs, she describes child care situations as lacking status and support. During the four years she has attended university she has worked numerous hours at a day care and is concerned for the welfare of many of the children. She is not so concerned about the quality of the programs as about the children who are caught in their parent's materialistic world of survival.

> It bothers me a great deal that many of these young children come to day care before 8:00 AM. In thirty minutes they are bused to school and then at 3:30 PM are transported back to the day care and may be there until minutes before or after 6:00 PM. Perhaps if the schedules stopped there, then these children could cope, but the center time may be only part of their long day. Too many parents come in the door of the center and say "hurry-up, you have a piano lesson," or "we have to drop your brother off for hockey and then take you to brownies." These children are off for fast food suppers so they can quickly drive somewhere else. After their hectic schedules they have to go to bed quickly because they must get up in the morning and start the entire routine again.

Clinton (1996) writes that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Our present society, as the village, needs to become familiar with how children develop and learn and the stresses and contexts to which they may be subjected. Elkind's (1995)

permeable family which is described as an institution where adults are preoccupied with self rather than with their children, requires understanding and support from teachers and others to assist all children to become productive and valued members of society.

Personal Connections for Sharon

Sharon entered her teacher education program with many years of experiences in early childhood programs and considerable understanding of current early childhood assumptions and beliefs. Through biographical conversations and the text of her student teaching reflection journal, she discusses the use of inquiry and reflective practices in developing teaching concepts. She discusses her past experiences of home and school, her work with young children, and the necessity for an empathic and sensitive manner in being truly effective with young children. It seems the next step for Sharon in her development in the complex expertise of teaching is the application of virtues, to use van Manen's (1994) term, or personal qualities of the teacher-child social relationship. Although Sharon expected the university experience to be empowering and supportive in the development of moral dimensions, she still feels she is submitting to hierarchical authority. She discusses satisfactory/unsatisfactory grades that help a class to collaborate and focus on learning, but then many students complain that without stanine grades they will have problems competing for jobs within the current tight job market. Again, macrocultural contexts detract from the learner as priority.

Sharon struggles with a conception of childhood described in materalistic values. What is appropriate for children and who will make that decision regarding programs? She also grapples with what Elkind's permeable family means for the current early childhood teacher. The structure of our schools and the business-like technological rationalism that comes from the macroculture may suggest that teachers

are more suited to be technical disseminators of information, governed by external controls, rather than being caring and sensitive human beings committed to a thoughtful understanding of a child's development and learning. As tighter controls are instituted, fewer examples of personal relations may be observable. Education students such as Sharon, who ask questions regarding the role of teacher-child relations, find opportunities to have an influence on current early childhood education. Are teacher educators and/or policy makers listening to the concerns, questions, and insights of current preservice early childhood teachers?

Summary: Listening To Preservice Teachers

Research participants, from their own perceptions, in their own way, and with their own agenda suggests how a teacher preparation program may be relevant and supportive. As the preservice teachers identified, articulated, and conversed about perceptions, beliefs, and values that were important to them, it became evident what effect their perceptions and perspectives had on their development and learning.

As teacher educators, we need to create opportunities for individual students and educators to pluck passionate chords as connected knowers in learner paradigms (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Educators need to trust students to choose relevant experiences, allow them to articulate perceptions, and model attitudes of the roles of life long learners. The three research participants have much to say and to share, and it is the responsibility of teacher educators to encourage them to communicate their learnings in their own distinct and individual ways. As teacher education boundaries are opened in thought and structure and alternate ways of knowing and learning are welcomed, listening to individual preservice teachers will assist teacher educators in designing and implementing appropriate learning experiences. To build on individual strengths requires an identification and articulation of one's own perceptions and support for constructing and reconstructing experiences. As the effect of an individual's

perceptions, beliefs, and values are understood, only then will teacher educators be prepared to nurture their students' development and learning

Chapter 6

Making Connections to Teacher Education

Research using biographical conversations is a way to open the discourse of participant and researcher as a means of searching to understand concerns and common meanings. A journey to discover insights into personal ways of knowing and the landscapes of preservice teachers is undertaken so connections may be made for increasing the making teacher education more meaningful. Butt (1991) discusses how the understanding of contextual realities within biographical accounts assists teachers in bringing meaning to their teaching roles. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) describe professional knowledge landscapes which are positioned at the interface of theory and practice. The biographical conversations of the three preservice teachers in this study reveal the effects of their perceptions, beliefs, and values on their teacher education. Some aspects for their teacher education deemed important from their biographical conversations, reflection journals, and student-teaching practicum include the effects of cultural myths, constructivist learnings, images and narratives in conversations through which the implicit is made explicit, a perceived moral climate, and the importance of an audience and arena for listening. As the voices of preservice teachers are heard, learner-centered education may become a possibility amid counter influences of rationalistic thinking. Unlike Goodson (1995) who believes biographical accounts and narratives may divorce the preservice teacher from dealing with the macroculture, these three participants seemed to identify from their perception, beliefs, and values how learner-centered education, both for children and themselves, would help them to cope and thrive more effectively.

Focus on Learners

Many early childhood educators support learner-centered education for the development and learning of young children (Bredekamp, 1995, Elkind, 1994, Katz, 1994, Hohmann & Weikart, 1995). Each of the three early childhood preservice teachers involved in this study strongly support a vision of the child as the basic material for developing appropriate early childhood education. They express the need for, and method of, transferring early childhood principles and beliefs into action. It is interesting to note that little in their conversations relates to curriculum directions or cognitive rationale theories. Each participant articulates her priorities in terms of the holistic development (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive) and learning of young children.

The principles of early childhood education, as summarized from the participants' information collected during this investigation, include the following.

1. Young children thrive in environments which include choice, decision making opportunities, and circumstances to be connected with others.

2. Separation anxiety, unnatural pressures, and insecurities are a reality for many children, thus it is the educator's responsibility to structure environments in which children feel free to take risks.

3. Integration of all aspects of a child's development and learning may be supported in an experiential, center-based learning environment and

4. Adequately organized resources and sensitivity to children's needs and interests may enhance a comfortable and stimulating setting for young children.

5. Children need to feel special and secure with significant others.

6. Children's rights are a priority in early childhood education.

7. Equity and diversity issues are important concerns to be addressed by educators for the benefit of young children and their families.

The biographical conversations elicited in this study are grounded, in part, in the participants early childhood experiences, and these conversations emphasis the concepts of the security and empowerment of individual children. For each participant, security centers on the construct of psychological safety, and these participants identified numerous early childhood principles relating to risk free environments through such action language as relating, connecting, choosing, integrating, advocating, playing, and caring. In general, the participants had stable and dependable early childhood experiences in which they had opportunities to make choices, to play with siblings and friends, and to experience the caring of significant others. As these participants relate their lived experiences and discuss the perceived needs of children, they have the opportunity to go beyond system-mandated psychometric principles or developmental rates to understand how the learner constructs social and cognitive knowledge from his/her own experiences (Fosnot, 1989; Marshall, 1992; Manus, 1995).

To experience a constructivist learning approach, preservice teachers need to feel empowered and autonomous. Inquiry and reflective practices are part of the process of constructing knowledge from experiences and empowered learners are individuals who first understand themselves as learners in the process of constructing concepts (Cannella & Reiff, 1994). The reflective journals of the three participants provided information about constructing knowledge during the student teaching practicum. For example, Lisa talked about her work with small groups of children from which she realized how flexible teachers must be as they adapt to the needs of the moment. Even with Sharon's background as an ECS aide, she was surprised at the amount of time required for planning and implementing the curriculum when she was

primarily responsible for everything. She had to meet the classroom teacher during weekends and evenings in order to have time to discuss the needs of the kindergarten program. Also, Kellie found constructing knowledge about classroom management traumatic. She made mistakes in procedures and discovered she had to reteach lessons when she lost the attention of the group of children.

Later, in biographical conversations, the three preservice teachers discussed how they did not feel they had power in their practicums. They felt their constructed learning was private and not to be shared with even the classroom teacher. Mistakes were generally perceived as being detrimental to their evaluations. For example, Kellie wrote early in her journal that changes in her phonics lessons should become much more solid, and the school-based coordinator responded with "well, we'll see." These reflection journals changed from very open and revealing documents at the beginning of their practicums to accounts that contained very little personal and risk-taking discussions in the later stages of the journals. There was a feeling of nervousness, uncertainty, and vulnerability in much of their writings. Although considerable knowledge was constructed and reconstructed from experiences, as revealed in observations and later conversations, the preservice teachers displayed a general lack of place. Time spent with other student teachers during seminar time was restricted, and there was the perception of having limited opportunities to openly discuss perceptions, feelings, and concerns about assessments. Owing to time constraints, interactions with the university facilitator were too limited for much in-depth discussions and of course the facilitator was connected with the university and the ultimate practicum assessment. It wasn't until after the practicum was completed that the participants relaxed their guard and in the biographical conversations many of their perceptions, feelings, and beliefs emerged. Opportunities for acknowledging and dealing with their perceptions, beliefs, and values should be available, not only during student teaching but also during other aspects of their teacher education. These

preservice teachers wanted and needed to be heard. Hargreaves (1994) writes that the voices of individuals may vary depending on the time and place and that one can not speak of the teacher's voice, only of teacher voices. However these preservice teachers, other than for one or two teacher educators, perceived that no one listened to their voices. They wanted a say in their education, they wanted power to become more visible and confident, and they wanted their constructed experiences to mean something. For example, any achieved joint ownership of decisions in their teacher education programs and field-based practicums was accompanied by expressed satisfaction. As Pinnegar (1993) points out, when preservice teachers come to their programs they are not blank states but they bring personality and talents which unfold and grow in response to their environment. These three participants had much to bring to their learning environments and they wanted a voice in how they would benefit from a learner-centered teacher education.

Some empowering concepts for children identified by the participants, included such aspects as identifying and building on children's strengths of character and knowledge, celebrating children's identifiable differences, and providing opportunities for children to be connected with others. To construct understanding and realities through experiences, young children need to act upon and interact with their environments and they need to be trusted to have a voice in choosing relevant opportunities for their own leaning (Hendricks, 1996; Katz, 1993; Paley, 1986). However, if preservice teachers do not perceive themselves to have power over their own education, will they be able to assist and allow young children to be empowered? From my observations, these three neophyte early childhood teachers verbalized and worked at empowering children, but they perceived many roadblocks to their own expression of power in their teacher education.

Moral Responsibility and Personal Qualities

Van Manen (1994) defines virtues or personal qualities in education as those practical concerns that introduce themselves in situations where teachers and others interact with and encourage children. Moral values in teacher education are identified as those things that may encourage aspects such as equity, diversity, and anti-bias curriculum in education (Shoen, 1987). Both values and personal qualities are identified in this investigation by studying the participants anecdotes, images, and direct quotations. Each participant views values and personal qualities as perhaps the most important educational dimensions to be applied in their teacher preparation programs. For example, they feel very strongly that all children need to be recognized and supported in early childhood education.

The research participants imply that collaboration with others, in designing and implementing early childhood programs, is a moral act, and the expression of moral actions to children in their daily education is their inherent right (Children's Defense Fund, 1994). The participants discuss a perceived lack of collaboration in assisting the development and learning of young children, and they feel they are required to comply with directions about treating children from a hierarchical education system that are not always in the best interests of the child. Yet, they do not challenge these directions perhaps showing that they do not feel they are in their own power to express their moral values. Respect for differing ideas is easy to verbalize but may be difficult to put into practice in everyday social interactions (Gray, 1989), especially as the participants did not perceive they had the freedom in their field-based assignments to be innovative, creative, or empowered.

These observed situations are like a large covered kettle boiling on the stove. As these principled research participants encounter situations that are inconsistent with their basic values and what they have learned about appropriate environments for young children, they are enthusiastic and bubbly, but the lid, like the cultural and

societal traditions in our student teaching practical settings, remains firmly on the kettle. Although their basic values are still present, the context of technological rationality keeps them from acting on their beliefs, or like a singing kettle, there may be lots of noise but little action. On the other hand, when the singing starts, is there not boiling water in the kettle and what implications does this have for their future early childhood situations?

Personal Qualities

The three participants have extensive prior experiences in developing personal relations with significant others and guiding children in their development and learning. Elkind (1991) and Van Manen (1994) suggest that many preservice teachers substitute a preoccupation with self for an interest in and care for children. The participants in this study provide a distinct contrast to a preoccupation with self and, as educators and advocates, discuss the importance of making a difference for children. They appear ready to climb on soap boxes as well as work in classrooms in order to advocate for environments that are open to the needs of children. In part, they recognize that their teaching role identity comes from integrating knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. As the practice of teaching is becoming increasingly technical and technologized, there will be a great need to identify those qualities that will provide for personal relations between teacher and child, so the child may participate fully in our democratic and diverse cultures (Goodlad, 1990). Personal qualities are those practical concerns which are encouraged by significant others, are evident in situations where educators and others interact with children, and are embedded and valued in communities in which teaching role identities are being formatted. Examples of personal qualities from the biographical conversations of these participants include, among others, patience, tolerance, trust, caring, respect, encouragement, and advocacy.

From recollections of their early childhood experiences, the participants each lived in homes and communities which have fostered the development of trust, reliability, and openness. Their experiences with parents, siblings, and significant others have been fondly and positively recalled. Thus, from their conversations and reflections there is evidence that they will be teachers who are reliable, trusted by, and available to children. For example, these participants never missed a day of their practicums and each one volunteered before and after the practicum term to have as many experiences as possible in classrooms. They saw their place as being with the children before, during, and after school and perceived the need to spend their time encouraging children rather than interacting politically or socially in staff rooms with other teachers. They continually considered how their cognitive expertise is important, but less important than the relational demands of teaching practice with young children. For each of them, teaching is understanding, relating with, and supporting children's growth and learning.

Another evident characteristic in each participant's interactions centered on caring and respectful attitudes in their interactions with children and colleagues. Each participant is vocal about equity, diversity, and advocacy issues. Probably, because there are not large minority populations in their respective communities, these participant's equity and diversity issues center on gender bias, poverty, and social welfare issues. Qualities such as tolerance, patience, responsibility, and caring are among those qualities most emphasized by these three preservice teachers to understand bias and diversity concerns. As discussed, Gray (1989) suggests that respect for differences is an easy virtue to champion verbally, but a much more difficult concept to put into practice, and yet differences are a source of immense creative potential. These participants appear prepared to recognize and deal with differences in children both in their professional relations and in their own conceptions of childhood. They are concerned with the holistic development and learning of the

young child, and much of their biographical conversations center on the virtues and personal qualities of effective teachers who advocate for all young children

In summary, each of these participants is a virtuous, balanced, and centered individual. No extraordinary dysfunctional personal problems are discussed, and each express well developed concepts about providing services to others. Serow (1994) maintains that preservice teachers who are enthusiastic, very committed to their profession, and willing to sacrifice and serve others view their teaching not as a job, but as a calling. With such well articulated values, qualities, and experiences, voices such as from these three participants need to be heard if the goal is to go beyond teaching as the instruction of immediate technical details to a conceptual understanding of teaching as a learner-centered perspective.

The Implicit Made Explicit

The impact of many teacher education programs on attitudes and behaviors of student teachers is less than expected and education students may find that few of their introduced and/or learned cognitive theories transfer when they begin field based practicums (Eisenhart, 1991; Grimmett & Erickson, 1991; Hollingsworth, 1989; Zeichner, 1986). Wubbles (1992) suggests that only some of the concepts of a teacher education program may be internalized and/or implemented if students' perceptions and beliefs are not taken into account in teacher education. Some implicit perceptions of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs may be hard to change because they are deeply rooted in experiences. Calderhead and Robson (1991), Johnson (1992), Marshall (1990), and Wubbles (1992) discuss that a preservice teacher's images that represent their construction of reality may be one way of understanding implicit perceptions. As a researcher, I did not set out to solicit images regarding constructs of their teaching but discovered a language of imagery grounded in biographical conversations. There are metaphors which describe teaching as a jig saw puzzle, a garden, and a mountain

to be climbed. Teachers are seen as everything from mean little ferrets to warm cuddly huggers and classrooms are viewed as reflecting all the colors of the rainbow. The teaching preparation program may be very influential in developing images to give preservice teachers a voice in their learning and to assist them in becoming conscious of their implicit perceptions. Also, it may be inferred from the work of Bullough (1994), Butt (1991), and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) that accounts of lived experiences may be another vehicle to make perceptions explicit. The three participants relate many stories from their early years, later school experiences, and current lives which yield rich examples of their perceptions, beliefs, and values.

One reason that it may be difficult to make the perceptions of preservice teachers explicit during a teacher education program is because the language used by teacher educators is usually the language of persuasion while the education student is listening with the language of perception. If the language of perception evolves from images, analogies, and metaphors and the language of persuasion is primarily the logical and analytical language of reason and explanation, then preservice teachers' perceptions are probably not influenced by the lectures of the teacher educators. Instead, these education students may be engaging in a process of rationalizing their implicit images (Caine & Caine, 1994; Wubbles, 1992). For example, if preservice teachers are instructed about the benefits of collaborative grouping for learning, but believe in an expert teaching metaphor, then cooperative groups may be just another seating arrangement to receive teacher directed information.

Each research participant entered the teacher preparation program with some well defined perceptions, as well as other implicit perceptions, that had varying effects on their behaviors. As previously discussed, from their work with children, they espoused developmental early childhood principles which were supported and extended in their early childhood teacher education program. Many of their beliefs concerning the development and learning of young children were explicitly related

through their biographical conversations and observed in their student practicums. For example, the participants arrived a week before the beginning of student teaching and found that an ECS teacher had yet to be hired. They were given the opportunity and responsibility of designing the kindergarten environment and they organized a center-based space around principles of choice, exploration, and experiences. There were interest centers and project activities that allowed the children to use planning boards to make decisions about their learning, and provision was made for children to work cooperatively. One of the participants was assigned to this early childhood center for the major portion of her practicum, and it was with anticipation that I as researcher/educator, was able to observe her interactions with the children in the center she had collaboratively designed. A certified teacher with no early childhood education was hired, the kindergarten program began, and almost immediately the preservice teacher expressed concerns that were inconsistent with her suggested reflective and active approaches to learning. The participant had emphasized the holistic development of young children, but started to question whether a developmental view of working with young children is acceptable in the public school at this time. Those such as Kagan (1992), Lacey (1977), and Shepphard (1992) discuss that preservice teachers often compromise their actions but probably not their beliefs when in apprenticeship practicum situations. However, in conversations following the practicum the preservice teacher discussed the same concerns and at this time there was no need for any strategic compliance. Such doubts and concerns seem to point out that education students may believe their learned theory but when faced with organizations or structures in which they have been immersed for years, they may unconsciously revert back to the known and comfortable. In this case, an adherence to compartmentalization of curriculum, cognitive rationale, and hierarchical order seemed to be an explicit manifestation of very deeply held implicit perceptions regardless of theoretical orientation. The basic values of the participants were not altered during

their practicums but their confidence and professional knowledge seemed less secure Apparently my university liaison role was not as effective for supporting learner-centered opportunities as were their experiences in the classroom for making them doubt their beliefs.

According to the research participants, relatively little time was structured in their teacher education for reframing their conceptions of teaching through self-reflections of their biographical foundations. Only two teacher educators in their entire four year university program introduced some biographical experiences and images into their learning process, and the participants did not fully appreciate or understand the implications of this process. Goodson (1995) is concerned that the biographical accounts which focus on an individual's development of such characteristics as perceptions, beliefs, and values do not take current technical competence or teacher evaluations into consideration. However, if preservice teachers can identify and/or develop moral responsibility, make implicit perceptions conscious, and learn about themselves as teachers by reflecting from biographical text then such personal qualities should make the remaining aspects of learning to teach easily attainable.

Listening To Preservice Teachers: Audiences and Arenas

From listening to past and current lived experiences, each participant has much to say, implicitly and explicitly, about their teacher preparation program and appreciation for those who support their thoughts and ideas. As suggested in the principles of interpretive inquiry, the language used to define terms and explain concepts is vital in negotiating meanings about the cognitive and social processes of preservice teachers. The language used by the research participants in this study was analyzed to gain insights into the perceptions, beliefs, and values of the participants and to discern how the participants view their teacher education involvement

Fenstermacher (1986) argues that it is the task of researchers to produce theoretical knowledge about teaching and the benefit of this knowledge for practice is that it may improve the arguments that preservice teachers use in their reflections when developing their concepts for teaching. However, the context of practice differs from the context in which much theory is constructed and theory is an abstract of reality, whereas practice is concrete. Using language to connect theory and practice was not a primary concern of the participants in this study. Similar to Wubbles (1992), they viewed themselves as developing and learning in a constructivist perspective where they actively constructed understanding from their own experiences. They entered the teacher preparation program with considerable knowledge and experiences with young children and anticipated positive results from their teacher education program. As they progressed through their various courses, they were surprised to find few opportunities for their voice to have an audience.

Time, evaluation, and system expectations are some contextual variables that make it difficult for individual students to be heard. Each participant commented that some of the early childhood staff were the only instructors in their university experience who seemed concerned with their personal and social relations. For example, reflection folders used during the early childhood practicum seminar afforded the preservice teachers a voice, but the students wished for more arenas to allow their voices to be heard. Perhaps as education students are supported in articulating their implicit perceptions, they may begin acknowledging their own power in identifying and dealing with perceptions. There were mixed feelings about communicating their beliefs and desires to their school based facilitators. They had entered their practicum with high expectations and anticipated the opportunity to implement many of their ideas with young children, but felt the classroom teachers did not have time to listen. The teachers were cooperative and helpful, but the students perceived they were set apart

and one student remarked that she didn't feel she was allowed to make professional decisions because she was not yet seen by the school staff as a professional.

One group that did listen to the preservice teachers, in their opinion, were the children in their field-based situations. The children responded in kind to their values and personal qualities and all felt their work, communication, and relationships with the children were the pinnacles of their teaching preparation programs. Support from other student teachers, family, and friends was expected and welcomed. Frequently the participants discussed a need for more reflection time, conversations, and networking with others who were experiencing the same course work and practical environments. They experienced some of these reflection needs during the practicum seminar, but would have welcomed more time and structure to collaboratively reflect on their present practical experiences.

As the participants so aptly discussed, not only are they being prepared for the classroom through knowledge of child development, principles of learning, and other related skills of teaching, but their development as teachers is much enhanced by an identification of themselves as learners through understanding the effects their perceptions, beliefs, and values on their development and learning. Biographical conversations are one way preservice teachers may implicitly and explicitly articulate specific perceptions, beliefs, and values. To ignore what the preservice teacher perceives may take away their power for self-directed learning in their teacher education. In this study, each participant has a balanced approach to life, and the focus on moral values and the development and learning of children may be an overriding reason for their choice to be involved in the early childhood focus area.

Countering Educational Myths

To many individuals in our macroculture and for numerous incoming preservice teachers, prevailing educational myths may counter the importance of

education, the teacher, and teacher education (Britzman, 1989, Lasley, 1980, Wubbles 1994). In this study, the three participants, for the most part, anticipated positive effects from their teacher education courses. Each, in her own way, implied that for the most part the most important learning about teaching came in a constructivist manner. They were less interested in academic rigor and more concerned about constructing their knowledge through reflective practices.

Another reason for discounting the myth that teacher education is unimportant may be that all three participants were convinced that a large part of their professional mission was to advocate for young children. Although they believed that the development of curriculum for young children is important, they discussed how much more important it is for a teacher to be sensitive to a young child's development and learning. From their prior experiences with young children, these participants brought many beliefs and perceptions which were supported and extended in their early childhood teacher preparation focus area. All three of the participants had predominately positive early school experiences and from selected recollections they had rich memories and perceptions to bring to their teacher preparation. Their beliefs, attitudes, and preconceptions about teaching center on their effectiveness with young children.

An emphasis by the research participants on the development of their personal practical knowledge may have been based, in part, on the significant others who had encouraged these participants to attend university and who had modeled the importance of teaching. Family members of the participants were very involved and influential in education and represented teaching as a way of life, rather than a vocation. The participants were respectful and empathetic to the realities of teachers and they expected to be empowered and influential in the system as they began their own teaching career.

In the perceptions of the participants, one aspect of the teacher education program that detracted from its potential was the lack of opportunities for experiencing authentic assessment. With their focus on child sensitive issues and learning processes in their education courses, they were disappointed to discover a preoccupation of the university with a system of psychometric evaluation measures. From our conversations, it soon became evident that their assessment experiences at the university were similar to the modes of assessment they experienced through their own public school experiences, and although the students had learned about many assessment techniques in their courses, they perceived they were not experiencing authentic assessment processes. Each preservice teacher was very concerned about their own evaluations since they believed that top marks were a main priority when being considered for the few available teaching positions in this geographical area. They were concerned that other students in their classes were grandstanding for this very reason, and remarked they chose assignments which may have reflected more what they perceived the teacher educator wanted than what would fit their interests or strengths.

A hierarchical structure was perceived as deciding much of the content of their teaching preparation program, and students felt lacking in their own power to make choices or decisions about their education. Some specific incidents, as recounted in their biographical conversations, indicate that these participants may be easily socialized into the existing realities of a traditional school-based culture. Another myth that is very much alive and revisited many times in the biographical conversations is that to be considered effective, beginning teachers must exercise control of the behavior of children at all times. For example, different ways of thinking or acting for students and teachers are often not rewarded and students are conditioned to react in predictable ways. One participant was observed teaching an elementary class using an activity-based lesson in which the pupils were having a great deal of fun while learning

the concepts. However, the classroom was busy but noisy and the student teacher looked uncomfortable as she tried to keep the pupils on task in a manner which she perceived as professional control in the presence of her cooperating teacher and an observer. After completing the center-based activity, she directed the class return to their desks and read from a specific section in their textbook. The entire class immediately complied and began reading very quietly. It suddenly occurred to me, as a observer/researcher, that these children were rewarding the preservice teacher, or at least in her perception, she was being rewarded by their quiet and controlled behavior. I wondered if the next lesson would have fewer active learning possibilities because the students were most easily controlled in a passive, teacher directed situation.

This expressed need for an authoritarian and dominant role in the classroom was a surprising dichotomy as each participant continually conveyed the most nurturing, sensitive, and caring attitudes for children. For many educators, a lack of the control of the behavior of children in the classroom signifies chaos and a lack of structure for learning. To early childhood educators, a lack of teacher-directed control means that they have given this control or power over to the children by structuring the situation so the children are planning their projects, making choices about their learning, and reflecting about their constructed and reconstructed experiences. It is a learner-centered perspective that allows the early childhood educator to truly believe children can be trusted to make good decisions about appropriate learning opportunities. Early childhood teachers are to be encouraged to facilitate and mediate the development and learning of children, rather than instructing the children to learn predetermined knowledge. This does not mean that anything goes, it means instead that children are a central part in the planning, implementing, and assessing of their own education. It is only when the young child is the focus of education that appropriate education can occur and educational myths and misconceptions lose their effect. Early childhood teacher education is very important, not just for the

information it imparts about good education for young children, but because it emphasizes a move away from the traditional structures of education where curriculum is more important than the child. The three participants were very cognizant of learner-centered early childhood education and continually expressed how proud they were of becoming teachers. However, the challenge becomes how to transfer their knowledge into power and practice for learners.

Suggestions for Teacher Education

The participants in this study advocate having more opportunities to design aspects of their teacher education program. In other words, they are suggesting a learner-centered perspective for preservice teachers.

1. Use of biographical conversations to discover and make explicit some of the perceptions, beliefs, and values of preservice teachers.

The construction of biographical accounts and images can be encouraged to facilitate the articulation of beliefs and perceptions which are or are not congruent with a learner-centered perspective for teacher education. Many preservice teachers have only experienced traditional structures and curriculum in their own education, and the development of biographical accounts and images can help make explicit their perceptions and provide opportunities for inquiry into meaningful personal concerns.

2. An analysis of language, construction and reconstruction of experiences, and critical reflections on biographical accounts may enhance the developing teaching roles of preservice teachers.

Each preservice teacher can be involved in biographical conversations in small groups, with instructors, or in written responses. Listening to preservice teachers and encouraging them to participate in dialogues have the potential of influencing their learning and shaping their reflections. The voices of preservice teachers need to be heard if they are to be treated with respect in their teacher education programs and

accepted as equal partners in field-based experiences. Biographical conversations can be used to identify experiences and ways of knowing. In turn, reflections can be used for making decisions about the potential value of instructional principles encountered during course work. Finally, experiences can be recalled and interpreted through biographical information, providing a framework for identifying and encouraging individual strengths and facilitating meaningful constructions and reconstructions of experiences.

3. Personal and social landscapes provide a vehicle through which preservice teachers can develop a deeper understanding of practical experiences with children.

When landscapes encourage positive climates and when teacher educators acknowledge and invite the construction and/or reconstruction of relevant experiences, preservice teachers become more aware of both educational opportunities and obstacles.

4. Collaborative and caring environments may be a "missing link in the chain" in teacher education.

Teacher educators can support the voices of preservice teachers through reflection journals, collaborative group inquiries, online experiences, and biographical accounts. Developing an awareness of the qualities of care, compassion, and trust may open up opportunities for thoughtful and important dialogues.

5. Elements of personal integrity are important in teacher education. These participants recommend the need for respect, choice, and release from the artificial pressures that come from perceived inauthentic assessment.

There is an overriding desire on the part of the participants to be involved in designing assessment processes which match principles of good early childhood

education. Assessment processes should include a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

6. A constructivist approach to learning can be part of learner-centered education.

Active teaching environments provide opportunities for choice, practical experiences, dialogue, and collaboration. As individuals interact in these environments they construct understandings from their experiences. For example, in a field-based program, experiences that are practical in nature may provide "ahas" and these new understandings, in turn, may be reconstructed and expanded.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Study the similarities and differences of those preservice teachers who see teaching as a calling and those whose motivation to become a teacher is primarily vocational.
2. Study other professionals who are directly involved in field-based activities with preservice teachers.
3. Study the central role of family and/or other significant individuals in the professional development of preservice teachers.
4. Examine the various voices of preservice teachers and their expectations for children and curriculum.
5. Investigate how experienced educators and preservice teachers can work together to support each other and collaboratively develop professional skills and knowledge.
6. Investigate both learner-centered and instructor-centered models of teacher education to determine how each approach influences perceptions, beliefs, and practices of preservice teachers.

A final thought -- This study supports recent research that suggests it is time to readjust our views of teacher education so we listen more closely to the voices of preservice teachers

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